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THE SPOKEN WORD;

OR, THE

ART OF EXTEMPORARY PREACHING,

ITS UTILITY, ITS DANGER, AND ITS TRUE IDEA.

WITH AN EASY AND PRACTICAL METHOD FOR ITS ATTAINMENT.

BY

REV. THOMAS J. POTTER,

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AUTHOR OF "SACRED ELOQUENCE; OR, THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF PREACHING" "THE PASTOR AND HIS PEOPLE; OR, THE WORD OF GOD AND THE FLOCK OF CHRIST," ETC., ETC

"Vivus est enim sermo Dei, et efficax, et penetrabilior omni gladio ancipiti."

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YAAMMEL OCHT MEO
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TO

THE RIGHT REVEREND GEORGE CONROY, D.D.,

BISHOP OF ARDAGH AND CLONMACNOISE:

IN GRATEFUL APPRECIATION

OF

MORE KINDNESS THAN HE CAN EVER HOPE TO ACKNOWLEDGE IN WORDS,

THIS WORK IS INSCRIBED,

WITH EVERY SENTIMENT OF AFFECTIONATE VENERATION, RESPECT, AND ESTEEM,

BY

HIS LORDSHIP'S DEVOTED SERVANT IN CHRIST,

THE AUTHOR.

JUNE 1ST, 1872.

Nihil Obstat.

BARTHOLOMÆUS CANONICUS WOODLOCK, D.D.,

CENSOR. THEOLOG. DEP.

Imprimatur.

✠ PAULUS CARDINALIS CULLEN,

ARCHIEPISCOPUS DUBLINIENSIS, ETC., ETC.

1*st Junii*, 1872.

PREFACE.

A VERY few words will suffice for all that I wish to say by way of preface to the little work which is here offered, with much respect and deference, to the notice of my brethren in the ministry of the Word.

In my treatise on "Sacred Eloquence; or, the Theory and Practice of Preaching," I marked out, and endeavoured to render as practically easy as possible, that more laborious method, of writing their sermons and committing the same to memory, which most young clergymen are obliged, at least for some time after their entrance into the ministry, to follow.

But, as there are very few missionary priests who have either the time or the inclination to undertake the immense labour which such a sys-

tem of preparation involves—even if we suppose this style of preaching to be the most perfect, or the most useful, in itself—I conceived that I might be performing a work not altogether unacceptable to them, if I ventured to present to the consideration of my brethren those remarks on the Nature and True Idea, the Dangers, the Advantages, and the most practical Method of Extemporary Preaching, which it has been my duty to prepare for the instruction of the young ecclesiastics whom it is my privilege to train in this interesting and important branch of their education.

It is for my readers to decide what amount of success has attended my labours. For myself I can only say, that, discarding, in view of the object which was before me, all attempts at eloquence of style, or of laboured composition, I have striven to the best of my ability to record, in the most simple and intelligible manner, whatever information I have been able to gather, and whatever experience it has been my good fortune

to acquire, during many years of study and constant teaching.

I will add, that, if my work shall prove of any service, no matter how poor or slight that service may be, to my brethren and my pupils, I shall be more than amply repaid for whatever labour and anxiety its compilation may have cost me.

The principal difficulty with which I had to contend in the composition of this treatise was one to which, perhaps, I may be allowed to refer.

Up to a certain point, the preparation for a written and an extemporary sermon does not substantially differ. In my work on "Sacred Eloquence," I entered at considerable length into all those matters which are included in the Preparation, Remote or Proximate, the Actual Composition, and the Delivery from Memory, of a written sermon. In the present volume I have been obliged to touch upon some, at least, of the subjects which I had already treated; and the difficulty in my way was, how to do this without returning over the same ground. I trust my

readers will find that, whilst I have not hesitated, when it was necessary, to refer to principles which I had already established and laid down, I have not substantially repeated anything which I had previously written.

It only remains for me, I think, to render my acknowledgments where they are justly and principally due.

I have derived much useful assistance from a treatise, "On the Art of Extempore Speaking: Hints for the Pulpit, the Senate, and the Bar," by the late Abbé Bautain, Vicar-general of Paris —a work which, although perhaps it is too thoroughly French, both in conception and execution, to become very popular amongst those who cultivate a more simple style of speaking, nevertheless contains many practical hints and much useful information. I am also under many obligations to the "Cours d'Eloquence Sacrée," of the Abbé Mullois, to the "Precis de Rhetorique Sacrée," of the Canon Von Hemel, to the Rev. E. P. Hood, to an anonymous writer in the pages of the Dublin

Review, and to several other distinguished authors whose names are mentioned in the work itself. Lastly, though not least highly appreciated and esteemed, my grateful acknowledgments are due to the great Oratorian, Dr. Newman, for the generous readiness with which on this, as on all former occasions, he has placed his learned and valuable writings at my disposal.

T. J. P.

CONTENTS.

Page.

CHAPTER I.

EXTEMPORARY PREACHING—What it is not—Its true idea, . 1

CHAPTER II.

Extemporary Preaching is not the expedient of the slothful man to save himself trouble—Whether Extemporary or Written Discourses are the more useful and effective—Certain qualifications which are indispensable to success in the Extemporary Preacher, ... 11

CHAPTER III.

Selection of the subject—Its great importance and its influence upon the success of the sermon—Ordinary and extraordinary efforts—Converting Sermons—The common Sunday Discourse or Homily, ... 27

CHAPTER IV.

The Conception of the Subject—Every good Discourse will be the development of one great Leading Idea—The people only remember one thing at a time—The unity of thought and conception which is necessary to the speaker at all times and on all occasions is doubly so to the Extemporary Preacher, since he is doubly exposed to the danger of wandering from his subject, ... 41

Page.

CHAPTER V.

In order to conceive our subject we must first meditate it deeply and thoroughly—Want of thought a great deficiency of modern sermons—The Modern Orator must be a man of keen intelligence, and possess the habit of close and earnest thought, ... 47

CHAPTER VI.

Two principal methods of meditating a subject, the Direct and the Indirect—Few men are competent to employ the Direct—Nature of the Indirect Method—We must know where to look for matter and how to read—How a man may make the thoughts of another his own, and the only way in which it is lawful to do so, ... 55

CHAPTER VII.

The Arrangement of the Matter of our discourse—Absolute necessity of such order and arrangement—Its true idea—Opinions of St. Francis Borgia, St. Charles Borromeo, St. Francis de Sales, St. Vincent de Paul, etc., on this subject, ... 65

CHAPTER VIII.

The two great methods of presenting a subject, by "plan," or by "view"—Obvious danger of the "formal plan"—Method of proceeding by "view"—Lacordaire—This method is not suited to men of ordinary talents—Superior advantages of the "plan," 74

CHAPTER IX.

Plan of a discourse—General object of the plan and its relation to the discourse—What the educated laity say of the eloquence of the pulpit, ... 86

Page.

CHAPTER X.

The plan of a discourse the fruit of deep thought and of much reflection—Essential properties of a good plan—Its influence on success, ... 94

CHAPTER XI.

Proximate preparation of the sermon—The preacher at work—How to parcel out the week in the most useful and practical manner—Plan of a sermon, ... 109

CHAPTER XII.

The preacher in the pulpit—Realization of his plan—How to introduce his subject—The practice of employing a written exordium and other choice morsels of eloquence in an extemporary discourse, ... 127

CHAPTER XIII.

How to seize the subject—Difficulty of laying down general rules—The advantages of a clear division in enabling a preacher to seize his subject—The qualities of a good division deduced from a consideration of the office and dignity of the preacher, ... 144

CHAPTER XIV.

How to seize the audience—The power of seizing our audience is absolutely necessary to perfect success—In what this power consists—The Christian orator must know how to teach and to move, how to appeal to the intellect and the heart—Instruction and argumentation, their force, nature, and essential qualities, ... 169

CHAPTER XV.

How to present the subject in a popular shape—Amplifica-

Page.

tion, real and false—Nature of true amplification—The essential part it plays in the success of the sacred orator, 192

CHAPTER XVI.

Word-painting—Its force, its employment, and its proper place in popular preaching—How it may be abused—Father Paul Segneri—Rowland Hill—Dr. Newman, etc., . 210

CHAPTER XVII.

How to conclude—The danger of unduly prolonging the discourse—Various methods of concluding—The crisis of the sermon, how it is to be managed, and the immense importance of employing it properly—Recapitulation, its nature and objects—The appeal to the passions, and how it is to be conducted—Examples: Massillon, St. Liguori, Segneri, Manning, Newman, ... 236

CHAPTER XVIII.

Style of the Pulpit—Style of the pulpit is essentially popular—Characteristics of a popular style, in the true acceptation of the term, ... 265

"THE SPOKEN WORD,"

OR,

The Art of Extemporary Preaching.

CHAPTER I.

EXTEMPORARY PREACHING—WHAT IT IS NOT—ITS TRUE IDEA.

ALTHOUGH it is certainly rather a dangerous experiment for a young priest fresh from college to make, it is equally certain that, sooner or later, a large number, perhaps the majority, of clergymen adopt what is loosely styled the practice of extemporary preaching. There are very few men who have the courage to undergo, week by week, the immense labour which is involved in writing out a set sermon, and in committing the same to memory word for word. Even before their departure from college, most men probably had begun to find how wearisome and tedious such a process becomes; and, although the

14

vigilance of his professor, and his own intimate conviction of the great utility and importance of such a system of training, might render the young ecclesiastic exact and careful in writing his sermons, and in committing at least some of them to memory, during the years of his college course, it is scarcely to be expected that he will persevere very long in such a mode of preparation after he has once been fairly launched into the multitudinous and distracting duties of the missionary life. Let his courage be ever so great; let his industry be surpassed only by his zeal; moreover, let him be nervous even to the last degree, and afraid of attempting to utter a single sentence which he has not previously written and committed to memory; he will, nevertheless, in many instances, perhaps as a rule, find it quite impossible to write his sermons, and commit them to memory word for word—even if we suppose such a style of preaching to be the best in itself, or the one to be most strenuously recommended to the attention of the missionary priest.

As we have said, a young preacher who starts by throwing away his pen, ceasing to call upon his memory, and assuming all the arts, all the expedients, and, shall we add, all the importance, of the full-blown orator, makes a very dangerous experiment. And, the misfortune is, that the men who thus commence, who

thus rush with reckless steps into that sacred ground where angels might well fear to tread, are, as a general rule, precisely the very men whose course of training, or whose natural qualifications, render them most thoroughly unfitted for such an undertaking. The man who has never been trained; who scarcely knows the difference between the argumentative and the persuasive parts of a discourse; whose natural defects of manner and of speech have received neither attention nor correction; is just the man to laugh at the diffidence and nervousness of another who is twice as well educated and twice as highly trained as himself. The latter is thoroughly impressed with the delicate nature of the task before him; he knows well how difficult it is to arrange one's matter nicely; to adapt it skilfully and judiciously to the capabilities and the special needs of our special audience; to deliver it earnestly and warmly, without repulsive coldness or ridiculous exaggeration. He knows how slight a distraction is sufficient to throw a man off the track, and to overwhelm, even the best meant efforts, with inextricable confusion. He has seen so many men "break down," more or less completely; and he has, in all probability, listened to such an amount of hostile criticism on preaching and preachers; that he never enters the pulpit but with fear and trembling, never descends

from it but with an intense feeling of relief and thankfulness, increased, of course, a thousandfold, if he have come off tolerably well. But the man who is self-confident simply because he is unconscious of his own defects, labours under no such painful misgivings. He cannot understand how some persons find it so difficult to preach. "He has no difficulty in the matter. It is so easy to talk; and, then, anything will do for the people. He must be an ignoramus indeed who cannot fill up the time, who cannot talk for fifteen or twenty minutes." And thus salving his conscience, he undertakes, without hesitation or misgiving, the discharge of one of the most sublime, as it is one of the most important, duties which could be intrusted to mortal man. Of the manner in which he discharges that duty it is scarcely necessary to speak. Of this, however, you may be pretty certain, that if he cannot quite close his eyes to the fact that great numbers of his flock make a practice of avoiding any service at which it may be known that he is to preach, while those who are present either fall asleep, or amuse themselves by acting the critic on what he says and his manner of saying it, he will be the last person to see this, or to realize the unpleasantness, not to use a stronger word, of his position.

But, whether it be from want of time to devote to

the composition of written discourses, or from natural disinclination to undertake the labour which such a process necessarily demands, it is quite certain that most missionary priests will, at some portion of their career, become what is called extemporary preachers. And, when we remark that by extemporary preaching most men simply understand *preaching without preparation,* is it necessary to add that, not unfrequently, the result is one at which, though mortals may only smile, the angels may well be supposed to weep.

Now, as the greatest inconveniences and the most mischievous mistakes arise, in many cases, from a misconception of first principles and of primary ideas; and as, in this essay, we propose not only to explain, as far as we may be able, the true nature of extemporary preaching, but strongly to recommend the same; we are especially anxious to commence by showing what it is not, or, rather, by dissipating some of the false and mistaken ideas which have gone abroad on this subject.

If you were to ask twenty men what they understand by extemporary preaching, there can, we imagine, be little doubt but that a majority of them would answer, "Preaching without preparation," and that they would mean what they said. They might differ slightly as to the measure of their unpreparedness. One would tell you that he finds it sufficient to walk

about the sacristy for a few moments, thinking over the subject of his discourse, before he ascends the pulpit. Another would add that, for his part, he is always anxious to read something bearing on his subject; but it is really so difficult to meet with any author who puts sermon matter briefly and clearly, that he has almost been compelled to give it up, and trust to the spur of the moment. Another may even go so far as to say that, sometimes, he actually makes notes of his discourse on the backs of his old letters, or on any other stray pieces of paper which may come to hand—probably adding, however, that he finds these notes of very little service, if not even positively embarrassing. But, whilst differing as to minor details of no practical importance, they will all agree in admitting the great general principle, viz., that an extemporary sermon, as distinguished from a discourse carefully written and committed to memory, is a sermon preached without any previous preparation, that is, without any preparation worthy of the name, either as regards collection of matter, arrangement of details, or form of words.

It is plain, however, that this cannot be the true idea of an extemporary discourse. An extemporary speaker is one, no doubt, who speaks, at least in a certain sense, on the spur of the moment. That is to say,

he speaks without any previous and formal arrangement of his words and phrases. Nay, in some cases, although it can hardly be so with a preacher of the Gospel, he may even speak without any previous selection of his subject, or any deliberate arrangement of his ideas on the matter of his discourse. In this latter supposition a man will be an extemporary speaker in the popular acceptation of the term; and it is quite possible that, in some rare cases, a man may be so highly gifted by nature, or so favoured by a fortunate combination of circumstances, as to command success. But we venture to think that these cases will, in truth, be very rare, just as the success, which he may secure, will be obtained in spite of all recognised rules and principles of oratory, rather than as the result of their observance.

For, to go back to first principles, is it not evident that in order to speak—in order to have any right or title to attempt to speak—a man must have something to say? Is it not plain that his whole claim to present himself to his fellow-men, to obtrude himself upon their notice, to trespass upon their patience, and to appropriate to himself a portion of their precious time, rests upon this primary assumption? Is it not equally plain that this something must be already existing in his mind as well as in his feelings; or, in other words,

that it must be prompted, as well by the intellect which seeks to enlighten and instruct, as by the sympathies which throb for the welfare of his fellows? Must it not be something sufficiently personal to his audience to attract their attention, and sufficiently important to command their respect and esteem? And, as we only deliver ourselves captive to those who seek to establish their claim to our attention and interest, just in proportion as they succeed in persuading us of their sincerity, their earnestness, and the pains which they have taken to put the matter in question before us plainly, clearly, and with the utmost possible perspicuity, must he not have laboured to arrange his matter, the something to be said, with all possible simplicity and method? The man who, in all ordinary circumstances, presumes to address an important assemblage of his fellow men under any other conditions than these, is simply an impostor and a charlatan.

Now, if these be the very primary conditions of all public speaking, and, *a fortiori*, of pulpit oratory, does it not follow that "extemporary preaching" and "preaching without preparation" are two very different matters?

Preaching without preparation is preaching in violation of all recognised laws and regulations, and certainly is not worthy of him who, in the discharge of this all-important duty, is acting simply as the legate of God,

who speaks through his lips, and deigns to employ him as the instrument of winning souls to duty and to truth. *Pro Christo legatione fungimur tanquam Deo exhortante per nos.**

But the extemporary preacher, in the true sense of the word, is a very different person from this. Supposing him to speak with all due legitimate authority, *positis ponendis*, he is a man who has something to say; something interesting as well as important; something, in a word, which is worth saying. Not only does he assure himself that what he has to say is worth the saying, but he studies with equal care how he may say it in the best possible manner; i.e., with the greatest order, simplicity, and feeling; or, in other words, with the most complete success.

Now, all this supposes a very considerable degree of intellectual activity and of mental labour, and is altogether a very different thing from preaching without preparation. For although it is true that those whose attainments or experience exempt them from the labour and obligation of committing their thoughts to paper, preach without any previous arrangement of words and phrases, it is equally true that here the measure of their unpreparedness has its limit, and that this is pre-

* 2 Cor. v. 20.

cisely the degree in which they may be said to preach without preparation.

The art, therefore, of extemporary preaching has reference merely to the *form of words* which the speaker will employ. If it can be said to have any reference to the matter of his discourse, this is only true to the extent that the preacher will not commit that matter to paper, but will content himself with such a purely mental preparation as is comprised in a careful and conscientious study of his subject, and a no less careful and conscientious arrangement of his matter by means of the plan of his discourse.

To sum up: Extemporisation, then, regards only the words and not the matter of a discourse; and an extemporary preacher is one who, having previously and carefully studied and arranged the substance of his sermon, trusts to the inspiration of the moment to supply him with the spoken words in which to give expression to those ideas which are the fruit of much earnest study and of much patient and thoughtful labour.

CHAPTER II.

EXTEMPORARY PREACHING IS NOT THE EXPEDIENT OF THE SLOTHFUL MAN TO SAVE HIMSELF TROUBLE—WHETHER EXTEMPORARY OR WRITTEN DISCOURSES ARE THE MORE USEFUL AND EFFECTIVE—CERTAIN QUALIFICATIONS WHICH ARE INDISPENSABLE TO SUCCESS IN THE EXTEMPORARY PREACHER.

IN the last chapter we strove to give a simple but accurate idea of what is meant by an extemporary sermon in the true meaning of the word. This idea is identical with that of Fenelon, who speaks of an extemporary preacher as, "a man who is well instructed, and who has a great facility of expressing himself; a man who has meditated deeply, in all their bearings, the principles of the subject which he is to treat; who has conceived that subject in his intellect and arranged his arguments in the clearest manner; who has prepared a certain number of striking figures and of touching sentiments which may render it sensi-

ble and bring it home to his hearers; who knows perfectly all that he ought to say, and the precise place in which to say it, so that nothing remains at the moment of delivery, but to find words in which to express himself."

Now, if this be the true idea of extemporary preaching, it is pretty evident that it cannot be taken up as the expedient of a slothful man whose great object is to save himself labour; and this will become still plainer as we proceed to consider the various stages which are involved in the preparation of an extemporary sermon. Meanwhile, it may not be useless to devote a few moments to another question which is quite certain to be put, viz., whether the delivery of extemporary discourses, or of such as have been previously written and committed more or less entirely to memory, is to be preferred; or, which of the two kinds of preaching is likely to be the more useful and effective?

If we were to rely on the authority of antiquity, or if our verdict were to depend upon the votes of the majority, it is, we imagine, quite certain that this verdict would be in favour of extempore delivery. But, is it not equally certain that so large and general a question does not admit of a general answer; but, that it must be considered in connection with numberless circumstances of time, of place, of subject, and of person, all

of which will have a very material influence upon the conclusion at which we must eventually arrive?

It is, then, quite impossible to lay down any general rule which shall bind all men alike, or which shall bind, with laws of unyielding inflexibility, even the same men in different and varying circumstances. You cannot say dogmatically that a man should always carefully commit to paper every word which he intends to utter, any more than you can lay down as a general principle that the only true orator is the man who speaks on the spur of the moment, and who gives expression, in strong unpremeditated language, to the sentiments which well up spontaneously from his inmost soul. Both assertions are as true in certain contingencies as they are, if not false, at least impossible and useless, in other and different circumstances.

If we were to commence by asserting that every clergyman should aim at becoming an extemporary preacher, we should, undoubtedly, lay down a proposition to which all men might, in a general way, render a ready assent. But if we were to advance a step further, and to affirm that no other kind of preaching is worthy of the name, and that the practice of delivering from memory sermons which have been previously written, should be neither countenanced nor allowed, should we not say something which, to use the mildest

form of expression, would be very foolish and impracticable?

For, is it not palpably evident that there are at least a certain number of clergymen who, in the beginning of their career, are so timid, so nervous, and possessed of such little command of language, as to be unable to give utterance to ten consecutive sentences unless they have been previously carefully prepared? To lay upon such men the alternative of preaching extempore or not at all, is practically the same thing as to tell them to give up the attempt. To force a man of this kind into the pulpit in such a contingency is to force him to make a fool of himself, and that under circumstances which, whilst they necessarily cover the preacher himself with confusion, produce at the same time another result which is even more lamentable; viz., bring discredit upon the holy and sublime ministry of the word. Look at the victim in the pulpit—we have all seen the sight some time or other—and is it not one which is painful to the last degree! He commences, perhaps indifferently well, but presently he begins to hesitate; he grows very red in the face, or very pale, as the case may be; then he stammers lamely on for another sentence or two, hesitates again, repeats what he has just said, and, finally, as likely as not, comes to a dead stop! But even if he should not break down so thoroughly as

this, he is so absorbed by his eager and painful hunt for the faltering and feeble words in which to express his still more feeble and faltering ideas, that his delivery and the whole tenor of his discourse becomes cold and uninteresting to the last degree. This terrible strain and preoccupation of mind extinguishes everything like fervour and unction, and, whilst it renders his action constrained and stiff and false, it deprives his voice of its natural inflections and force, so that the discourse which should have brought glory to God, benefit to his flock, and the consciousness of important duty creditably discharged to himself, results in as complete and miserable a failure as it is possible to conceive. To how many young men do not these remarks apply in all their fulness? Are there not even some men, honest, zealous, and truly devoted, who never, through the course of a long life, succeed in conquering that nervous timidity which is such a terrible foe to many of those whose duty obliges them to address large bodies of their fellow-men?

Again, how few men are there, at all events how few young men, who, in the commencement of their career, possess such a profound, and at the same time expedite and practical, knowledge of the mysteries of our holy Faith, together with such an ease and facility of speaking in public, as justifies them in commencing their

career as extemporary preachers? Those who do thus commence, without possessing the qualifications at which we have just glanced, speak, as a rule, without exactness, precision, order, or plan. It is well when they are preserved from saying many things which are wild, vague, and less true; some things, perhaps, which are actually false, and this, even in matters of doctrine and of practical morality. If they have any plan in their discourse, do they not frequently lose sight of it by tedious, vain, and useless digressions? Do they not weary their hearers by their foolish prolixity, and by their laboured efforts to find expression? Possessing neither depth of learning, solidity of matter, nor grace of delivery, is not the very highest degree of excellence which such men ever attain that of becoming mere talkers, an accomplishment from which every sensible man will earnestly pray to be preserved? And, would he not be guilty of a rash, not to say a guilty act, who should attempt to persuade men such as these, men destitute of many, if not of most, of the necessary qualifications for the task, to commence their career in the pulpit as extemporary preachers? Would not this be the most effectual way of producing those unfortunate objects who have been, not unhappily, described as *spin-texts* rather than *preachers?* And how well this style of preaching is hit off in the person

of the hapless individual of whom such a capital story is told! This good man, by dint of much assurance and not a little practice, had become what he himself considered an extemporary preacher, but what his hearers more truthfully designated as an inveterate talker. At all events, he had acquired the fatal gift of an unlimited power of "talk." Like many mere talkers, however, it seems that, no matter the subject on which he might commence, he always came back to the same point; and in his case, this point was a dissertation on the duty of paying one's debts. His hearers having listened to this homily until they were sick to death of it, finally appealed to the preacher's ecclesiastical superior to give him some text from which he could not branch off into the old familiar topic. The rector accordingly selected the "Conversion of St. Paul" as the subject for next Sunday's discourse, and charged his subordinate to confine himself to it, thinking that it could not possibly be made to lead up to the curate's favourite grievance. But all in vain. The curate naturally enough commenced his discourse by enumerating the principal marks or signs of a regenerate man, and, to the horror of the congregation, he immediately proceeded to prove that the foremost and most obvious of these consisted in the payment of outstanding accounts. So true it is that sameness is one of the

greatest dangers, as it is one of the most common failings, of extemporary preachers.

Then, again, in deciding whether extemporary or written sermons be the better, we must keep in view not only the person of the preacher, but the nature of his subject, the audience to whom it is to be addressed, and the place in which it is to be delivered.

Whilst we might be justified in recommending a man who has to deliver a simple exhortation, in a small country church, before an unlettered and ordinary congregation, to preach extempore, should we be acting a prudent or even warrantable part, in giving the same advice to one whose duty it might be to deliver a formal discourse before the members of a university, or within the walls of a vast building? Undoubtedly not. In a small country church you need not raise your voice above the ordinary conversational pitch, whilst your discourse will probably be of the simplest character both as regards its subject and method of treatment; and in this case all the necessary conditions in favour of an extempore sermon are present. Your subject and your audience will equally admit and require the familiar and discursive style which suits most naturally the extempore discourse. But, let it be a man's duty to preach on some formal subject before a learned and critical audience, let us suppose the members of a

university, where everything will depend on the argumentative nature of his style, the exactness and precision of his language, and the unbroken regularity and completeness of the entire discourse: or, let us suppose him speaking in a large and spacious church, where, simply in order to be heard, he must articulate every syllable with the most rigid distinctness, and know precisely the very word which he is about to use, so as to give that swell to the sound of his sentences which, in such a position, is absolutely indispensable: and how few men are there who, in these circumstances, could acquit themselves either creditably or successfully by means of an extemporary discourse?

From all this, is it not plain that there are men to whom, on account of inexperience, imperfect and inexpedite knowledge of doctrine, or the circumstances of time and place in which they may find themselves, not only you cannot recommend extemporary preaching as the better of the two, but to whom you cannot recommend it at all or in any sense? Men in these circumstances must be content to follow the more laborious path which we have endeavoured to mark out, and render as practically easy as possible, in a treatise on "Sacred Eloquence" which may perhaps be known to some of our readers.

On the other hand, supposing a man to possess the

necessary qualifications,* there can be no question but that extemporary preaching has its own most signal and decided advantages over any other method, and that its cultivation is eminently worthy of every minis-

*By necessary qualifications we understand that perfect self-possession, that accurate and expedite knowledge, and that readiness of speech which is the fruit of much practice in writing more than anything else, which fit a man to speak in public without the previous labour of having written his discourse and committed it to memory. As a particle of practice is often more useful than a page of precept in such matters as this, it may not be out of the way to refer to the training through which I put the students of our college who are under my care in this branch of their education. It is briefly this: after having, during a space of two years, applied themselves to the study of the principles of composition and elocution, and gone through a course of English literature, the whole accompanied by continual practice in writing, my pupils enter upon the study of "sacred eloquence," properly so called. This continues for three years. During the whole of this time, in addition to the formal lectures which he receives on the principles of sacred eloquence, each student is obliged to write, once in three weeks, a short sermon. The subject of this sermon is appointed by the professor, and it must be written carefully and in accordance with the rules of eloquence. A certain number of these sermons (as far as time permits) are read in public by their authors, and have to undergo the criticism of the professor. They are all, without exception, collected by him, to be examined at

ter of the gospel, pre-eminently worthy of those hard-worked missionary priests who may be so truly said to bear the heat and burthen of the day—men who, economise it as they may, will be able to find but little time

his leisure, and are returned to his pupils with such remarks appended as he may think it useful or necessary to make. It will be seen at a glance that this supposes a very formidable amount of writing on the part of my pupils. I do not, of course, expect that these sermons will be of much practical utility to the young missionary in his after career; although positive matter, carefully collected and arranged, can never be useless. Sermons written in college will, from the circumstances of the case, nearly always want that element of practical application which can alone render a discourse living and efficacious. But what I do expect is, that this constant practice of writing will give them so great a facility, not only in the use of language, but in the orderly arrangement of matter and ideas, that they will be able, very early in their missionary career, to take up the practice of extemporary preaching, and to discharge it in such a manner as will be satisfactory to their superiors, creditable to themselves, useful to their people, and worthy, at least in some humble measure and degree, of the God whose ministers they are. And I may add that, as a general rule, I have every reason to be satisfied, not only with the diligent application of my pupils to this branch of their studies, but also with the measure of success which rewards their zealous efforts.—T. J. P.

to devote to their preparation for the discharge of a duty which every true priest feels to be one of the most onerous and important of those which God has placed upon him.

Without delaying to treat of the first and most obvious advantage of extemporary preaching, viz., economy of labour and of time, we have no hesitation in asserting that, *positis ponendis*, the extemporary sermon, in the true sense of the word, will be more successful than one which has been previously written out and committed to memory. Whilst it is true that some men, artists by nature, and perfected by long practice, attain such an ease and naturalness of manner in delivering sermons of this kind, as almost to persuade you that they are speaking extempore, it is equally true that, as a general rule which suffers but rare exceptions, the delivery from memory of a written sermon is nearly always stiff and formal. A preacher who follows this method nearly always presents the appearance of a schoolboy repeating his task, and, in many instances, repeating it very indifferently. On the other hand, the extemporary sermon is delivered with an earnestness which proves that we speak the language of conviction, and with a warmth which goes at once straight to the hearts of our hearers. And, not only is such a sermon delivered with earnestness and warmth, but also with

that easy and natural manner which, perhaps more than anything else, gains the confidence of our hearers, and, diverting their attention from the mere form of our matter, turns it full upon the substance of the discourse, thus disposing them to profit to the utmost by our instruction. The preacher from memory lies under the necessity, and a very painful one it is, of keeping a constant and strained watch upon the mere *words* of his discourse, lest he forget them, and, with them, the whole thread of his argument. The extemporary preacher, released from this painful necessity, becomes at once more free and vigorous in his action, able at the same time to give the rein to his zeal and yet to keep it within due limits. The words of the preacher from memory, no matter how eloquent or beautiful they may be in themselves, are, in a great measure, dead words, since they are void of that life which is born of the ever varying circumstances of time, of place, and of person. The words of the extemporary preacher, springing as they do immediately and on the spur of the moment from his heart, are full of life and pregnant with energy of the best and holiest kind; and it is no wonder if such a man is able to impart a warmth, an earnestness, a reality, and a depth to his figures and sentiments which they could have acquired from no amount of mere technical study or closet preparation.

Lastly, and this is undoubtedly the most formidable objection which can be advanced against the practice of preaching from memory, the man who simply recites *verbatim* a sermon which he has previously written, is such an utter slave to the words of his discourse as to be altogether unable to follow those inspirations which the Spirit of God may impart to him during the course of its delivery. No matter how much the circumstances in which he finds himself may differ from his expectation; no matter how ill-adapted to the capacity of his audience the sermon which he has composed may be; he is tied down to the words which he has written, although he feels, and feels most intensely, as he delivers them, that they are utterly lost and thrown away. As St. Liguori says so well: "These kind of preachers carry their discourses in their memory, and whether they speak to the ignorant or the learned, they will not change a single word. They perceive that their audience do not comprehend them. No matter, they can give no new development, no further explanation. They can clear up no point or present it under different and more intelligible aspects. They must confine themselves to repeating the lessons which they have learned." On the other hand, the extemporary preacher, and in this lies his real strength, is at full liberty to proportion his discourse to the effect which he wishes to produce.

He sees that he has made an impression: he is at liberty to follow it up, and keep pace with it, by insisting upon and developing still more forcibly those points which he perceives to have hit the mark. Or, it may be, he sees that his remarks fall coldly, and without fruit, on his hearers: he is at liberty to present his arguments under other shapes, to illustrate them by more homely and striking figures, and to dress his ideas in words better suited to the capacity, the understanding, and the necessities of his audience. Passing quietly over those which have missed their aim, he can return again and again to those arguments which have struck home, and thus secure his end. As the author of "The Parish Priest" remarks, such a man can watch the effect of his words upon his audience, can constantly contract or expand his arguments, and vary his illustrations, according to the pulse of that audience and the effect which he sees to be produced. And it is precisely in this capacity of expansion and of repetition that the real force of extemporary preaching is to be found. A discourse may thus lose something in the way of compactness and strength, but what it thus loses will be more than compensated for by the actual gain in the way of practical and tangible results. Besides, as old Fuller so quaintly reminds us, the ordinary run of men are not able to take their intellectual food in too

solid a form, but require to have it seasoned by matter of a lighter and more attractive kind.

Finally, we cannot, perhaps, better conclude these remarks on the relative advantages and disadvantages of the two systems of preaching, than by reminding our readers of the well-known saying that "Writing makes an exact man, conversation a ready man, and reading a full man."

CHAPTER III.

SELECTION OF THE SUBJECT—ITS GREAT IMPORTANCE AND ITS INFLUENCE UPON THE SUCCESS OF THE SERMON—ORDINARY AND EXTRAORDINARY EFFORTS—CONVERTING SERMONS—THE COMMON SUNDAY DISCOURSE OR HOMILY.

HAVING considered some of the most striking advantages and disadvantages of the extemporary sermon, and having glanced at the leading qualifications which are indispensable to him who attempts it, it is now time to set the young preacher practically to work at the preparation of a discourse of this nature; and the first step in such preparation is obviously the selection of a subject.

The selection of a subject on which to speak, simple and matter of fact as it seems, is a much more important step than may at first sight appear. It is one which, probably, is taken more as a matter of course than any other. As an ordinary rule, admitting, per-

haps, but few exceptions, a clergyman glances at the gospel of the following Sunday, and the work is done—he has selected the subject of his discourse. At the same time, we do not mean to say that in reality the ordinary Sunday's discourse will not, and should not, be built upon the Gospel of the day. But what we venture to say is, that this rule may be taken too generally, just as it may be applied too loosely and without sufficient regard to the exigencies of sacred eloquence.

There can, of course, be no doubt that, as it will probably be the duty of the missionary priest to instruct his people at least every Sunday, so he will found his instruction, for the most part, upon the lessons to be derived from either the gospel or epistle of the day. But it is equally true that there are many occasions on which he must be prepared to leave this beaten track, to aim at more striking results, at greater efforts for God and the good of souls, than are ordinarily attained by a simple instruction, just as it is also true that he can never afford, even in his most familiar instructions, altogether to lose sight of those striking results.

Since, then, the subject is the foundation, not only of the discourse itself, but also of all our efforts, and of all those strokes of oratory by which we aspire to do a

least something for God and the souls of men, it necessarily follows that not merely the selection of the subject, but also of the line of treatment which we propose to follow in its development, is a matter of great importance and one which cannot be determined at random. This is evident from the very nature of eloquence, from the very fundamental idea of the office of a preacher; since sacred eloquence is nothing more than the power of so influencing and acting upon our fellow-men as to persuade them to become better Christians and more faithful servants of God. And it is plain that such an end as this cannot be attained unless by the concurrence of several very important and clearly defined elements of success.

We shall not act upon our fellow-men unless we know them well; and, in reality, how little in most cases do we know about them? The Abbe Mullois has said, the people are not known even by the most keen-sighted statesmen. We study them superficially, in books, in romances, in newspapers, or, as likely as not, we form some ludicrous and distorted idea which is as far as possible from the truth. Perhaps we scarcely mix with them at all, and are as ignorant of their virtues as we are of their vices. We know nothing of their peculiar circumstances, of their wants, their dispositions, their capacity, their prejudices; and yet a

knowledge of all these things is absolutely necessary in order to be able to speak with effect.

We read that the first public sermon delivered in Paris by Lacordaire was a complete failure. As they went out of the church the audience passed judgment upon him in no hesitating or equivocal terms. Lacordaire himself was perfectly conscious of his failure, but, like a man of genius, he was able to penetrate its causes, and, thoroughly as he seemed, whilst labouring under the smart of this first disappointment, to despair of any future success, he was, fortunately for posterity, equally able to apply the necessary remedies. He had written his sermon carefully and elaborately in his study, but without any practical or present thought of his audience. As a natural consequence, it fell flatly upon his hearers; it did not deeply interest them, because it really had no practical relation to them; what the preacher said was no doubt very well said, but it would have suited some other audience equally well. Probably it would not really have suited any audience, and for the plain simple reason that it had been composed without practical reference to one audience more than another. Lacordaire was quick to perceive this. "I have not sufficient flexibility of mind," he said; "I do not understand the world. I have lived too solitary a life. It is not the first time I have discovered

how little my mind sympathizes with an ordinary congregation." Thus probing his own weakness and the defects in his oratorical armour, he set himself assiduously to work to apply the remedies. It is not necessary to add that thorough and brilliant success rewarded his efforts.

If we do not know the people we cannot love them, and yet, unless we love them, we shall never speak to them in such a manner as to produce any lasting impression upon them. Neither shall we speak to them in the language of the soul, in language which will move their hearts, if we speak on subjects which are above their comprehension, or which are unsuited to them in their peculiar circumstances. What result can a clergyman expect who preaches to a simple country congregation in the style, perhaps in the very words, of a Massillon denouncing the corruptions of a profligate French court? Equally barren of result will be our efforts if we select a subject which is unfitted to our own proper style, or if we treat that subject in a forced and unnatural manner. We may safely take it for granted that every man has a style of his own, one which, in some sense, is peculiar to himself. Many men have a peculiar power of moving souls through the consideration of the mercy and goodness of God. Others, though perhaps their number will be small, produce great

effect by the terrible pictures which they are able to draw of the punishments of hell, etc., etc. But this may be laid down as a general and most certain law, that the effect produced, no matter what the subject or the peculiar talent of the preacher may be, will be just in proportion to the correctness and skill with which each man apprehends his own proper gift, and the exactness and industry with which he develops his own proper talent.

Whether, therefore, he is to deliver an ordinary simple instruction founded upon the Gospel of the day, or, whether he aims at one of those exceptional efforts which are not merely useful but often absolutely necessary for the welfare of his flock, the preacher will, in selecting his subject and his method of treating it, be equally careful to keep a few broad general principles plainly and clearly before his mind.

And, in the first place, as regards those extraordinary efforts which must necessarily be made, at least from time to time, as during the seasons of Advent, Lent, or on the occasion of parochial retreats, etc., etc.; the preacher must carefully remember that the object of all such discourses as these is *to convert*. Let him persuade himself that it is not a matter of choice, but simply a matter of duty, to seize these occasions and turn them to proper account. No matter how well

may flow along, his people will, by little and little, be overcome by the universal tendency to decay and backsliding which is, alas, the sad inheritance of fallen nature. Nor will the pastor sufficiently provide against this universal tendency to corruption by obtaining for his flock the extraordinary grace and help of a "mission" once in every four or five years. No! Great as may be the results of a successful mission, they will quickly fade away and be lost unless they be supplemented and renewed from time to time, *tempore opportuno*, by the zealous efforts of the pastor himself. Hence, the obligation, as opportunity offers, of forsaking the beaten track of the ordinary Sunday instruction, to preach *converting sermons*—sermons which will appeal vividly to the conscience, move the heart, and lead to practical and earnest reformation of manners, or, at least, to a renewal of first fervour. Is it not plain that, if we are to preach sermons of this kind, the selection of our subject will have much to do with our success? If we are to preach converting sermons we must choose converting subjects, and more than that, such converting subjects as we can handle most powerfully and efficaciously. It is needless to add that subjects for an extraordinary effort of this kind are to be sought for in "The Four Last Things," "The End of Man," "The Evil of Sin and its Eternal Punishments," "The

Attributes of God," "The Redeemer, His office and His Attributes," "The Sacrament of Penance, its nature, the qualities of contrition and of confession, and the preparation which it demands," "The Holy Communion," etc. These great subjects, or, at least, such of them as the Pastor may select, must be brought before his people with all the warmth and earnestness which are inspired by conviction, by zeal, and by tender love for his flock. These subjects, which suit all people, which are never out of place, which never grow old or lose their tremendous importance, only require to be treated in a becoming manner to produce their effect. But, to produce their effect, they must be treated in this becoming manner, and this will not be the case if the preacher either mistake his subject, or his own power of dealing with it. If, possessing none of the necessary qualifications for handling such a subject, he attempt to preach on the terrors of God's judgments, he may indeed rave at the top of his voice; he may tear a passion into tatters; but he will fail in his object; he will not convert his people. This is, however, somewhat of an extreme case; for, after all, a Christian priest, thoroughly in earnest and devoted to his calling, can scarcely treat such a subject without producing, if not all, at least much of the desired result. But we bring it forward as a proof of the great neces-

sity of a thorough and precise apprehension of our own peculiar talent in order to insure perfect success; since, it is only in such circumstances that we shall fully realise our aim.

Then, again, how many men, earnest, zealous men, fail to produce the desired effect, because they propose the practice of virtue to their hearers in such a manner as to inspire them with disgust for it! Such preachers dwell altogether on the rough hard side of virtue; they dilate upon, perhaps exaggerate, its difficulties; they smoothe away no obstacles; they soften no hardships; they say nothing of the beauty, the grandeur, and the infinite reasonableness of virtue in itself; nothing of the abundant helps of divine grace, or of the sweetness of the yoke of Christ; and, hence, they fail in moving their hearers efficaciously to its practice simply because they do not propose it in a becoming manner. And, in all these circumstances, they fail, not through want of zeal, or good will, or sufficient knowledge, so much as from a lack of that keen intelligence, and of that thorough good common sense, which must ever have a leading share in forming an orator; since it is these qualities which must, above all others, teach a man what he is best fitted for, the peculiar turn of his own genius, the passions by which his own heart is most deeply moved, and, as a necessary consequence, the

most powerful qualifications which he possesses by which to act upon, and to move, the minds and hearts of his fellow-men.

For these, and other kindred reasons, we venture to think that the longer a man is employed in public speaking the more thoroughly will he appreciate the truth of these principles. As the Abbé Mullois so well remarks, "If a young priest has not thoroughly studied the difficulties of public speaking, he is apt to think that the art of preaching consists in composing a sermon, learning it by rote, and then delivering it without tripping. If he finds that he is considered to have acquitted himself tolerably well, he is thenceforward disposed to dogmatise remorselessly, and to tolerate no appeal from his irrevocable verdicts, with all the stateliness of a man who has the satisfaction of not knowing what he says. But," continues the Abbé, "when a man has studied and laboured, say, for fifteen years, he becomes more indulgent and moderate, and begins to understand that there may be other ways of doing good besides his own. . . . We learn dogmatic theology designed to serve as the groundwork for solid lectures; but if nobody comes to hear them, or if they send the audience to sleep? Ethics also are learnt, and the solution of difficulties which occur at the confessional: but what if the people do not come to confession? . .

It should be ever borne in mind that the object and aim of our studies is '*propter nos homines, et propter nostram salutem.*' . . . . A priest should not be learned for himself only, but should be capable of communicating what he knows to others, and of securing their attachment to it. Things are taken for granted which no longer exist. It is supposed that the churches are full, that tepid Christians attend the services, that the confessionals are frequented (?) These are gratuitous assumptions. Before such notions can be borne out by facts, our priests must be taught how to draw men to the church and to the confessional, and how to instruct them when they have brought them there."

Passing now from the consideration of these extraordinary efforts, we come to the Homily, or ordinary Sunday discourse; and although it is true that in discourses of this kind there may not be much room for freedom of action as regards the selection of subject, it is no less true that in our treatment of that subject we shall not be able by any means to overlook this point, as will abundantly appear from even a cursory glance at the nature and scope of the Sunday Instruction.

The Homily or ordinary Sunday discourse is described by the Bishop of Orleans,* "as a short but interesting

* "Entretiens sur la Predication Populaire."

sermon, calculated from its nature to produce a lively impression upon souls." It may be founded on the Mystery of the day, or, as will more ordinarily be the case, on the Gospel which is read in the Mass. It may be treated either by way of paraphrase or comment on the entire Gospel; or, what is more generally useful, the Gospel may be reduced to some one distinct proposition, which will be treated, *positis ponendis*, according to the ordinary rules of a discourse.* But as the primary end of the Homily is to lead our hearers to a reformation of life and manners—in other words, to make them better men—it is in all cases most essential to see that it has a practical application to our special audience and their special wants. Whilst it affords ample scope for warm appeals to the heart; whilst it ought ever tend to touch and to influence the sinner, to win him from vice and to excite him to the practice of virtue; it has but little room for matters that are merely speculative, or for any empty display of style or laboured composition. In one word, it will be a plain simple discourse, instructive, full of earnest exhortation, and, above all things, eminently practical. To attain its end it must oblige our hearers to look into themselves, and cause them to take efficacious resolutions to

* "Pastor and his People." Part ii. chap. ii.

amend their lives. It cannot attain this end unless it have a special application to the audience before us, to their wants and their particular failings; and from this it follows that, although the *subject* of the Sunday discourse may be practically marked out for us in the Gospel of the day, the *application* of that subject will still be left to our own discretion, whilst the whole effect of our sermon will depend upon the prudence and the tact with which we select such a treatment of the subject as will most clearly conduce to the end to be attained.

Whether, therefore, there be question of an extraordinary effort, or of the simple ordinary Sunday sermon, the discreet pastor will be equally solicitous to study how he may present his subject to his audience in its most striking and practical aspect, how he may render it most pleasing to them, and thus most readily win their acceptance of his views. Above and before all things else, he will, from the first moment he has selected his subject, keep continually before his mind several practical questions, upon which his treatment of that subject will depend for much, if not for the whole, of its success. These questions are: What is it precisely that I am about to propose to my hearers? By what means, by what arguments, by what earnest appeals to them, do I expect to gain my end? When

once the answer to these questions stands out, pertinently and clearly, before his mental vision, he has surmounted half the difficulties which beset his position. He will no longer run the risk of finding himself in the place of a certain unfortunate preacher who, when describing his performance in the pulpit, expressed himself in the following terms: "I did not know," said he, "what I was going to say before I got into the pulpit; I did not know what I was saying whilst I was there; and when I came down I did not know what I had been saying."* The individual in question did not complete the picture by attempting to describe the effect of his discourse upon his audience in this particular case; but, as a general rule, we may safely venture to assert that when a man enters the pulpit without a definite notion of what he is going to say, his audience will depart in a state of mind, the correlative of this, without a definite notion of what he has said. *Ex nihilo nihil fit.* He had nothing to say, and he said it.

* Dublin Review, vol. 36—"Sermons and Preachers."

CHAPTER IV.

THE CONCEPTION OF THE SUBJECT—EVERY GOOD DISCOURSE WILL BE THE DEVELOPMENT OF ONE GREAT LEADING IDEA—THE PEOPLE ONLY REMEMBER ONE THING AT A TIME—THE UNITY OF THOUGHT AND CONCEPTION WHICH IS NECESSARY TO THE SPEAKER AT ALL TIMES AND ON ALL OCCASIONS IS DOUBLY SO TO THE EXTEMPORARY PREACHER, SINCE HE IS DOUBLY EXPOSED TO THE DANGER OF WANDERING FROM HIS SUBJECT.

HAVING carefully selected our subject, in accordance with the general principles laid down in the preceding chapter, we shall, at the same time, have laid the foundation of what is perhaps the most important step of all in the preparation of an extemporary sermon, viz., the obtaining of a clear conception of that subject and of the leading idea of our discourse.

Every good and practical discourse will contain, and be summed up in, one, and only one, great leading idea. We have seen that an extemporary discourse supposes

a careful preliminary operation of thought. This operation of thought may, of course, extend itself in various ways; it may embrace a number of arguments, of illustrations, and of appeals, more or less forcible, to the passions; but, if it have been well conceived, and vigorously worked out, it will be ultimately reduced to one great leading idea which will grasp the whole substance of the discourse. And this for the plain and simple reason, that a speaker is no more able to treat of a variety of subjects at one time, than an audience is able to master and retain a discourse which thus treats of everything in general and of nothing in particular.

He, then, who wishes to speak in public, must, as the Abbé Bautain remarks,* above all see clearly on what he has to speak, and he must obtain a right conception of the leading idea of his discourse. In other words, the two first stages of our preparation are reduced to the precise determination of the subject as already explained, and to the conception of the idea of the discourse.

In every living thing we find a principle of vitality and life, a principle of individuality and unity which

* "The Art of Extempore Speaking. By M. Bautain, Vicar-General, and Professor at the Sorbonne." An excellent translation of this useful work is published by Bosworth and Harrison, London.

at once vivifies the object in which it dwells, and distinguishes it from any other. As in man the soul; as in the physical world the germ of life; so in the intellectual world, in the conceptions of the mind which are truly living and efficacious, there must be a principle of life, of individuality and unity. In a discourse this source of life, this principle of vitality and unity, without which the loftiest sentiments and the most polished sentences will be but as empty phrases falling idly on the air, is to be found in the leading or parent Idea; that Idea which, ultimately embodied in the proposition of the discourse, will be the great point whence we shall start on our intellectual journey, to the establishment of which all our arguments, illustrations, and appeals will be directed, to which they will all be, more or less directly, referrible, and finally return.

We shall consider this great principle of unity and life more closely in its own proper place, when treating of the plan of a discourse and its leading qualities. Let it suffice to remark here that this precise determination of our subject, this energetic discipline of mind and thought by which a man forces himself to speak of one thing at a time, is necessary to the speaker at all times and on all occasions. It is doubly necessary to him who extemporises.

The man who *writes* his discourse will not, in all proba-

bility, unless he be altogether ignorant of the ordinary principles of composition, or destitute of the faculty of reasoning, wander away very widely from his subject. But, unless the road which he is to travel has been clearly defined, unless the point from which he starts, the destination whither he tends, and the precise route which he is to take, all stand out clearly and unmistakably before his mental vision, it will easily be otherwise with him who extemporises. Such a one is like a traveller who starts, indeed, upon his journey with the intention of reaching a certain goal, but without any clear or definite knowledge of the road by which he is to travel. It is all a matter of chance; one wrong turning may lead him in the very opposite direction to that in which he should advance; and, being a matter of chance, he is as likely as not to take the wrong turning. It is the same with the extemporary speaker who has not secured some great leading idea, so clearly and definitely marked out that he cannot mistake it, and an idea to which everything else in his discourse will be subordinate. He is exposed to all the adverse influences which are seldom wanting on such an occasion. A sudden noise in the church, an unexpected disturbance, an unforeseen distraction, is quite enough to confuse him; and, hence, unsupported as he is by manuscript or copious notes, he will infallibly,

unless he can fall back strongly on a sharp, clear, precisely defined leading idea, lose his way, and, after floundering more or less hopelessly, amongst the pitfalls which surround his path, be finally buried in an abyss of confusion and inextricable disorder.

And, after all, what other result could be expected from the efforts of one who undertakes to speak without really knowing what he is about, or what he wishes to say; who, having no one object clearly before his mind, speaks, as a natural consequence, of all things except those perhaps which are best suited to the occasion. Ask the hearers of such a preacher what he said to them, and they can give you no account of it. Ask himself, an hour after his sermon, what he preached about, what precise virtue he inculcated, what practical method of practising it he laid down, or on the other hand, what particular vice he assailed, and what means of overcoming it he suggested—ask him what was the one great leading idea which, during the whole course of his sermon, he was labouring to drive home, the one great truth which he was striving to write on the hearts of his hearers, and he can give you no definite answer. You will see that, in a vague and disorderly way, he may have glanced at many things, but that he entered thoroughly into none of them. Either he did not understand, or he did not care to

remember, that primary truth which no orator, least of all the sacred orator, can ever afford to forget; viz., that ordinary people only remember one thing at a time. If you drive steadily, earnestly, and perseveringly, at this one thing for half an hour, in all probability you will make them remember it. You may, of course, vary your arguments, and diversify your illustrations, as much and as widely as necessity may require and good sense suggest; but let all come back to the one point, let all tend to the elucidation and confirmation of the one great idea, and you will write that idea, spite of themselves, upon the hearts of your hearers. Glance at many things, and they will remember nothing.

The first great step, then, in the preparation of an extemporary discourse is to obtain a clear, precise, and well-defined view of the leading idea which is to be the soul, the vivifying and unifying principle, of that discourse. Let us now proceed to consider how we are to arrive at the conception of this idea, and how it is to be rendered fruitful and full of life.

Yes Father!

CHAPTER V.

IN ORDER TO CONCEIVE OUR SUBJECT WE MUST FIRST MEDITATE IT DEEPLY AND THOROUGHLY—WANT OF THOUGHT A GREAT DEFICIENCY OF MODERN SERMONS —THE MODERN ORATOR MUST BE A MAN OF KEEN INTELLIGENCE, AND POSSESS THE HABIT OF CLOSE AND EARNEST THOUGHT.

WE have seen the great importance of obtaining a clear conception of the leading idea which is to pervade the whole discourse, which is to give that discourse its vitality and life, and make it fruitful to those who listen to us. Let us now consider how we may obtain possession of this idea.

We obtain possession of this idea—or, in other words, we *conceive it*—by a practical and earnest meditation of our subject. And, by the meditation of our subject, we understand nothing else than the placing of ourselves face to face with it, in such a manner that we may study and sift it to the very bottom, that we may look at it in

all its different aspects, until, so to speak, we become irradiated with it, until we see at a glance how we can make it conduce most powerfully and efficaciously to the end we have in view.

For example: we know well that the ultimate object of all our preaching is to make our hearers better men, and that this end is to be gained by instructing our people solidly in the truths of their religion; by imparting that instruction in such a pleasing and attractive manner as to render it acceptable to them; and, finally, by powerful appeals to the passions by which the will is swayed and ultimately led captive. *Docere: Placere: Movere.* With these great principles clearly before us, we proceed, after having carefully selected the subject of our discourse, to study it with all attention, and with an anxious solicitude to discover how we may most practically make it conduce to this threefold end. In view of this object we consider the amount of absolute instruction which our hearers may require on the point in question, and how that instruction may be conveyed to them in the clearest and most precise terms; the line of argument which is most likely to carry conviction to them, and thus make the most lasting impression upon them; and, finally, how, after having instructed and convinced them of the truth of what we say, we may act most powerfully upon their wills, and what strokes

of oratory, what figures of speech, what telling illustrations from Holy Writ or elsewhere, we may employ to move, to soften, and to gain them to our purpose. With such a conscientious meditation of our subject as this—a meditation which will be eminently practical, because we shall never lose sight of that special audience, with its special needs and necessities, to whom our discourse is to be addressed—it is morally impossible that, sooner or later, directly or indirectly, we should not obtain a clear and vivid view of that one great leading Idea which is to pervade the whole discourse; to the establishment of which everything else is necessarily to be subordinate; that idea which is to be the source of life and light and strength; that idea which we are truly said to conceive, since it is the offspring of our own intellectual operation, the fruit of our own earnest thought.

As the Abbé Bautain beautifully remarks,* in every living discourse there is a parent Idea, a fertile germ which animates the various parts of the discourse, just as the principal organs and members of a man's body are animated by his soul. And this is the Idea which is conceived by the mind through the earnest meditation of our subject.

* Chapter 9.

All the great masters of the art of eloquence insist emphatically upon the urgency of this meditation of our subject, and of the train of thought which it necessarily supposes. We ought never lose sight of the great but homely truth that "what costs but little is worth precisely what it costs;" and if this be true, might we not fairly ask a good many extemporary preachers how much their sermons would be worth if they were to be weighed in these scales? Perhaps one of the most striking deficiencies in the sermons of the day, and one which causes educated men to declaim most loudly against the vapidity of the pulpit, is their want of thought. And this remark applies scarcely less forcibly to some who write their sermons than to some who preach extempore. The man who writes commences his composition without having spent any time in serious thought upon it, just as the extemporary preacher enters the pulpit without any definite idea of what he is about to say. The result is that the one and the other speak at best but superficially; too often, perhaps, they are as inexact in doctrine as they are inelegant in expression. The discourse is merely a heap of cold, pointless, vapid ideas; a mass of texts without application, and of reflections at once immature and fruitless. Having taken no pains to study his subject, possessing no clear or well defined ideas upon it, the preacher is, as a necessary

consequence, obscure. He cannot but be cold and inanimate, since it is only in the furnace of deep, earnest meditation that the heart and the imagination are efficaciously inflamed—"*In meditatione mea exardescit ignis.*"* Like a traveller in a strange country, he knows neither the direction whither he tends nor the nature of the road by which he proposes to journey. He is painfully diffuse, perpetually returning over the ground which he has already traversed, taking much time and many words to say that which might have been well and abundantly expressed in a few clear, neat, and well-chosen sentences. Let us convince ourselves that nothing helps so much, especially in these days, to bring the ministry of the word into contempt, as shallowness and want of thought. *We* are all the more forcibly bound to remember this from the very peculiarity of our position, a peculiarity which constitutes one of our greatest privileges, but one which there is a great temptation to abuse. When we enter the pulpit we are in absolute possession of the position; there is no one to call us to account, to reprove us for our errors, our coldness, it may be our inanity. If we were pleading at the bar we should be taken sharply to task at every turn, and, hence,

* Ps. xxxviii. 4.

although the matter in debate might be of little moment, we should take good care to master it thoroughly, and this not only to gain our cause, but to provide against the attacks of those who were weighing our every word and argument in order to overthrow and defeat them if that were possible. In the pulpit we plead for God and the interests of immortal souls, but, safe from the attacks or reproaches of a watchful adversary, and rashly forgetful of the dreadful account we are to render of our sacred ministry, we do so with an amount of negligence, coldness, and thoughtless unpreparedness, which would cover us with confusion were we to attempt to plead in such a manner before any human tribunal of justice. Let us be assured that we shall only master our subject by deep thought and earnest meditation on it. Unless we thus master and fully possess it, how can we announce and develop it with ease and facility? In what other way is our intellect to gather its arguments, our imagination its rich and varied figures of speech, our heart its best and deepest emotions? No! let us convince ourselves once for all that if we are to take our proper place amongst the men of our age, if we are to be orators in any sense of the word, we must be men of keen intelligence, men to whom the habit of close and earnest thought is at once easy, pleasant, and familiar. Let us apply to our-

selves the sound advice which the Abbe Mullois* gives to preachers. "Let us seize," says he, "the superiority which is conferred by knowledge, and, by its means, we shall secure the attention of both great and small. The world is athirst for knowledge. Let us give it knowledge; but, to do this, we must, first of all, have filled ourselves with knowledge, else we shall be weaker, instead of stronger, than those whom we are to teach. If we are men of learning we shall be stronger than the world, and we shall be able to dominate it by a twofold power, the power of human and of Divine knowledge. The world possesses the earth, and the power of human speech, only. We shall possess all that the earth possesses, but we shall possess something more, something to which it can make no claim, the power of God's word. Thus we shall rule the world." Let us ponder the words of another modern writer,† who speaks no less plainly on this matter. "At all events," says he, "they oblige us to acknowledge that there may be some justice in the reiterated complaints we hear from the more highly cultivated portion of the laity of the dulness and unprofitableness of the generality of modern

* "Cours d'Eloquence Sacré Populaire," etc. Par M. L'Abbé Isidore Mullois.

† "The Duty and the Discipline of Extemporary Preaching." By F. Barham Zincke. Rivingtons.

sermons. Their attainments in knowledge, and the thought they have bestowed on that knowledge, are in advance of the knowledge and thought which perhaps the majority of modern sermons exhibit. If this be so, and few, I believe, are disposed to dispute it, there can be but one way of meeting the complaint, and that is, by paying more attention to preaching; by which I mean that we must endeavour to attain to fuller and wider knowledge of the subjects upon which we have to speak, and to a more effective and better way of saying what we have to say." Finally, let us take to heart the wise precept of Besplas.* "If you desire to compose a telling discourse, read a little, think a good deal, feel intensely." "Lisez un peu, pensez davantage, sentez beaucoup."

* "Essai sur l'Eloquence de la Chaire."

CHAPTER VI.

TWO PRINCIPAL METHODS OF MEDITATING A SUBJECT, THE DIRECT AND THE INDIRECT—FEW MEN ARE COMPETENT TO EMPLOY THE DIRECT—NATURE OF THE INDIRECT METHOD—WE MUST KNOW WHERE TO LOOK FOR MATTER AND HOW TO READ—HOW A MAN MAY MAKE THE THOUGHTS OF ANOTHER HIS OWN, AND THE ONLY WAY IN WHICH IT IS LAWFUL TO DO SO.

WE have probably said enough to convince the young preacher that the success of his sermon will depend very much upon the manner in which he shall have meditated his subject, and grasped it in one great leading Idea. Let us now investigate somewhat more fully the various ways in which a man may meditate his subject.

These methods are reduced to two—the direct and the indirect.

There are, no doubt, in the world some men of great intellect; of deep and accurate information; with a

grasp of mind which enables them to turn that information to ready and practical account; and, above all, with souls simple, unsophisticated, keen for knowledge, and eager in their search after truth. When such men are called upon to address their fellows, it is easy enough for them to place themselves at once, directly and immediately, face to face with their subject. Requiring no collection of materials beyond what is supplied on the spur of the moment from the well-stored granary of their own minds, and beaten into shape and applied to the subject in question by the mere force of their own intellect, they are able at once to bring all the powers of their mind to bear upon it. They have scarcely begun to think of it before they are, so to speak, penetrated with it, and irradiated with the light which it diffuses. They see it in all its aspects. They pierce, with one strong, keen, eager glance, the precise manner in which it is to be brought to act upon those whom they are about to address. Thus meditating it, in itself, and in its manifold relations to their audience, they, sooner or later, *conceive their subject* in the spiritual and intellectual acceptation of the term, and, in this conception, obtain the leading idea of the discourse; that idea, which (unless they prefer to take a *view*—and of this we shall have something to say presently) will be embodied in a plain, clear, tangible proposition,

to the successful establishment and sustainment of which the remainder of the discourse will be directed.

This is called the *direct* method of meditating our subject, and it is pretty plain, we imagine, that, although infinitely superior in itself to any other, it is one which is feasible only to the man of genius, of keen intellect, of deep and ready information.

There are, however, comparatively few preachers sufficiently well versed in sacred science, or, at least, whose knowledge is sufficiently fresh and accurate, to enable, or, indeed, entitle them to endeavour to grasp their subject without some previous revision and reading-up of matter. Such men as these—and perhaps it is just as well that they will always constitute the great majority—must be content to follow a more laborious and circuitous route in the meditation of their subject. They must adopt what is called the *indirect* method, which is nothing else than such a course of careful and scientific reading, as will enable them to arrive at the same results as are achieved by the man of greater genius, and of more brilliant attainments, through the mere force of his own unaided powers. Let them, however, console themselves with the reflection that this indirect method, although it may be somewhat more laborious, is vastly safer than the other, whilst a little

practice will render it not only easy, but as pleasant as it will certainly prove useful.

The first step, then, in the indirect method, is a course of reading, more or less elaborate as occasion may require, on the subject which we have selected for our discourse. A great part of the success of this course of reading will depend, we need hardly say, upon one or two very practical points. *We must know where to go for matter, and we must know how to read.*

We must know where to go for matter; since it is of the utmost importance to the hard-worked missionary priest, whose time for reading will probably be very limited, to be able to lay his hand *at once* upon the book which he requires. Amongst the many works suitable for such a purpose, it is not very easy to make a selection, as this is a subject on which men's minds differ so widely. It may, however, be said, in a general way, that the principal books which we need consult for this purpose will be the Holy Scriptures, a sound theological treatise, or a good ascetical work. Holy Scripture will supply us with the strongest proofs, the grandest figures, and the deepest affections. A good theological treatise will furnish us with clear, precise, and, above all, with sound and correct arguments; whilst, from any standard work of ascetical theology, such as the Practice of Christian and Religious Perfection

by Rodriguez, we shall draw, not only sound principles of Christian life and perfection to impart to others, but such an access of unction and religious feeling as will render our words warm and efficacious. For ordinary and familiar catechetical instructions we need scarcely go beyond the admirable Catechism of the Council of Trent, which, as every priest knows, treats in the most simple, but, at the same time, fruitful and lucid manner, of the Symbol, the Sacraments, the Commandments, and Prayer. The study of these works will perhaps be far more useful than any mere "sermon books." Ordinary sermon books will probably afford little assistance to most men. Such works contain, of course, set and finished sermons, developed and amplified according to recognized and established rules; but it is evident to every one that a man who aspires to preach practically and to the point, with an earnest, sharp, and special application of his discourse to the special audience before him, can only avail himself of their assistance with great difficulty, and with many palpable risks.

The main point lies, not so much in the possession of many books, as in the thorough knowledge of a few. As we have said above, we ought to be able to lay our hand at once upon the book we need; otherwise we shall lose more time in turning over the pages of various works than would have amply sufficed for our purpose.

And as we require ideas, not words, it is obvious that, for the greater number of men, the most practically useful books, in addition to those of which we have spoken, are either those which contain good skeleton sermons, of which we possess an abundance, especially in the French language; or, matter for preaching, such as the "Thesaurus Biblicus," "Thesaurus Patrum," and perhaps best of all, "Instructissima Bibliotheca Manualis Concionatoria," of Lohner.

Not only must we know where to go for matter, but what is equally important, we must know how to read. Many men read much and with very little practical result, since their reading is of such a discursive character as to leave no solid traces behind. Others read as though their object was to form their style; but although this was very good and very necessary in its own proper place, it is not the kind of reading which will be of any practical service to us in the circumstances which we are now considering. Now, we read simply in order to acquire matter; matter which is to be beaten into shape and reduced to order in the crucible of our own intellectual operation, that thus it may be laid before our hearers in such a manner as to contribute most powerfully and efficiently to the attainment of our end, the instruction and persuasion of our audience. Having selected our author, we propose to ourselves to

sift him to the very bottom, that we may, in the first place, refresh our memory on those matters which we may have begun to forget, and thus put ourselves in a position to impart sound, solid, and exact information and instruction on the point in question. More than this, we endeavour, if we happen to be studying a sermon or any other formal composition, to master and possess the general order of the discourse, and the manner in which the various ideas are brought out and presented. We also study the figures of speech, the comparisons, the examples, the forcible illustrations, which give life and light to the ideas expressed, and contribute to the nerve, force, and beauty of the whole discourse. We read in such a manner as is best calculated to invigorate the imagination and set it in full play, to excite our zeal, to inspire us with conceptions that are full of life and passion; in a word, to put the spirit of invention into full and active operation.

It is obvious that these results will not be obtained by mere discursive or hasty reading. Hence, if we would read with profit, we must never lose sight of the great object in view. We must read slowly, carefully, and, above all, with pencil in hand; and, reading thus, with deep and serious attention, and with the mind's eye ever turned in upon ourselves and the end to be gained, we must, as we proceed, make short but lucid

and substantial notes of everything that strikes us as peculiarly useful either for the instruction, the conviction, or, the persuasion of our hearers.

We must read in this manner: slowly, carefully, with pencil in hand, until we feel that we have done enough; or, to use a still more homely phrase, we feel full of our subject. The time has then come to lay our book aside, to bring once more the operations of our mind into full play. To this end, we take up the notes which we made during our reading, and re-read them face to face with our subject. We ponder them seriously, before God; we endeavour to penetrate them in all their varied significancy; to discern and mark out, with the utmost possible clearness, the relations which they most naturally assume towards the subject which we have selected for our discourse. By this serious meditation we become fully possessed of our matter, and *make it our own* in the true and only sense in which it is ever lawful to appropriate and make use of the writings or conceptions of another. Although we are traversing a path which many have travelled before us leaving their traces behind them, and on which therefore it is almost impossible to be original in the full sense of the word, we, nevertheless, as Bautain remarks, attain that other species of originality which consists in putting forth no ideas except such as we have made our own, and which

we have thus quickened with the life of our own mind; a condition which is indispensable if the discourse is to be vivified by the principle of life; a condition which distinguishes the orator who speaks from the actor who merely impersonates; since the former draws on his own interior resources even whilst he borrows the substance of his ideas from another, whilst the latter, no matter how well he may act, never advances beyond the province of the actor, who does not even pretend to give expression to any sentiment of his own. Not only do we thus make the ideas which we may have borrowed from another our own, to be expressed, in due course, in our own way and in our own words, but we, at the same time, conceive our subject in the manner already described, and obtain a plain, clear, and tangible view of the leading idea of our discourse, that idea which is to be presently embodied in the proposition, to the establishment of which we shall find, when we proceed to make our plan, that our "notes" will conduce in a marvellous and most useful manner.

Thus, by the indirect method, do we arrive, if more laboriously, perhaps more safely, at the same result as was obtained by the man of greater genius, and of more brilliant attainments, through the mere force of his own keen piercing steady thought, viz., the conception of our subject.

If we are compelled to travel by the slower route, let us be thankful that, leading as it does to such practical and satisfactory results, it is so easy, clear, and well-defined.*

* On this whole subject see "Sacred Eloquence," chap. iv. sec. ii., and chap. viii. sec. vi., third edition.

CHAPTER VII.

THE ARRANGEMENT OF THE MATTER OF OUR DISCOURSE—ABSOLUTE NECESSITY OF SUCH ORDER AND ARRANGEMENT—ITS TRUE IDEA—OPINIONS OF ST. FRANCIS BORGIA, ST. CHARLES BORROMEO, ST. FRANCIS DE SALES, ST. VINCENT DE PAUL, ETC., ON THIS SUBJECT.

WE have now arrived at a very important point in the preparation of an extemporary discourse. Through the process of study, of thought, and of diligent reading, which we have been engaged in considering during the last few pages, we have brought the young preacher to that point in which he will have obtained a clear conception of his subject, of the leading idea which is to predominate and vivify his discourse, and the general means by which he is to secure the end which he proposes to himself in his sermon. In other words, he will have secured the leading idea, and collected the materials of his discourse.

Having made, during the course of his reading, more or less copious notes, he has under his eye, at this stage of his preparation, all those texts of Scripture, those extracts from the Fathers, those theological reasons, arguments, proofs, and illustrations, which seemed to him best calculated to instruct, convince, and move his hearers; he possesses abundant materials with which to raise the edifice that is presently to be erected, but, as yet, he possesses those materials in a confused mass. They lack that order, regularity, and symmetry, which are just as essential to the edifice which he proposes to raise, as the same qualities are necessary in the construction of a material building. As the wood and stone which have been brought together only become useful under the builder's hand when they are arranged according to the plans of the skilful architect who has conceived the design in its entirety and unity, so, the materials which the young preacher has collected during his study, only become thoroughly and practically efficient when they have been arranged with such skill and precision that everything will be in its proper place, and thus conduce, in the most striking manner, to the strength, the vigour, and the compactness of the *whole*.

The preacher sees, indeed, at a glance, that whilst the *idea* of his discourse will necessarily be *one*, the *points of view* from which it may be presented, the

arguments by which it may be sustained, and the examples by which it may be illustrated, will be *various*. He perceives, too, that his subject naturally divides itself into several leading heads, and that the materials which he has collected during his course of reading just as naturally conduce and lend themselves to the sustainment of one or other of these heads. And the task before him, at this moment, is thus to arrange and apportion his materials; to reduce that which is confused to order; in one word, to put everything into its proper place.

No doubt we have all heard, over and over again, that "order is heaven's first law." By this primary operation of the Divine Hand, as it moved over the face of the deep, it brought forth, out of that which had been void and empty, order, life, and light. In his own degree and measure, the young preacher must play the part of a creator, since he must, by the arrangement and disposition of his materials, evoke order out of confusion, and give light to what, without this, would remain dark and obscure. The materials which he has collected constitute the matter or substance of his discourse; but, to this matter he must give its own proper form, since it is the form alone which is capable of imparting beauty, light, and life; and he will do well never to lose sight of the truth laid down so forcibly by

Fenelon, viz., that we seldom find perfect order in the operations of the mind and intellect.

Abstracting for a moment from the precise method according to which we may arrange our materials and put them in order, we lay it down, then, as an incontrovertible proposition, that some such disposition and arrangement is a point of the utmost importance; and one which will have the most direct influence upon the success of the discourse.

By the order and disposition of a discourse we understand the tout-ensemble, or general effect and harmony of the whole, as well as the proportion of the various parts; or, in other words, the general plan of the discourse, its division into several great leading heads, and the unity or connection of the whole. St. Francis Borgia* speaks with special emphasis and clearness of the absolute necessity of this orderly arrangement of the materials of our discourse. "An architect," says he, "when he is about to construct a grand edifice, is not satisfied with merely collecting the materials which he needs. On the contrary, his attention is principally directed to the manner in which they are to be arranged, and how he may give the necessary proportions and strength to the various parts of the building. Consider

* "De Ratione Concionandi." Cap. 4.

the action of God," he continues, "in the creation of the world. Did he not, in the first place, reduce chaos to order, and bring forth light out of darkness? Did he not arrange all things else in their own proper position before proceeding to the creation of man?" Behold the model of the preacher! It is thus that he ought, in the first place, to select his subject, to meditate it, and to obtain a general idea of it in its entirety. Then, he must arrange his materials with assiduous care, putting each part in its own proper place, so that, each member contributing its own share to the general result, order, wisdom, and intelligence may pervade and dominate the entire discourse.

It is scarcely necessary to dwell at greater length upon the utility, not to say the absolute necessity, of order and arrangement, if our preaching is to be practically successful. It is scarcely worth while either to glance at a difficulty which is raised now and again, probably by those who wish to find an excuse for their own short-comings, to the effect that no such order or arrangement as that on which we insist is to be found in the sermons and instructions of the Fathers. This is one of those specious objections which are scarcely worth answering. It may suffice to say that it will be time enough for most preachers to despise or neglect the ordinary rules and precautions which prudent men

are but too glad to take, when they shall have received the inspirations, the assistance, and the light from above, which were so lavishly bestowed upon the Fathers, and which ordinary mortals, who neglect the ordinary means of doing His work which God has placed within their reach, are least of all likely to receive. No doubt the Fathers knew perfectly well what was best suited to the times in which they lived and the people amongst whom they ministered, and that they employed the means which they judged best suited to the end. But it is no less certain that St. Charles, St. Francis Borgia, St. Francis of Sales, St. Vincent of Paul, and St. Liguori, also knew perfectly well the style of preaching which was best suited to the necessities of after ages, and these great saints and masters of sacred eloquence all speak emphatically of the necessity of order, of arrangement, and careful disposition of materials, in sermons which are to be successful in modern times. That the sermons of the Fathers produced great results in their day, and results to which we may not aspire, is most undoubtedly true; but, it is no less true, that, in our day, the only sermons which produce tangible and lasting results are those which are distinguished for order, clearness, and definiteness of purpose. Pulpit eloquence may indeed be brilliant and sparkling without being orderly or practical; it will not rarely

happen, perhaps, that its deficiency of practical application will be in direct proportion to its brilliancy; but although such preaching may please for the moment, and fill the mouths of men with the praises of the orator, it will leave no fruit behind; it will be as barren of real results as it will be unworthy of Almighty God and the sacred chair.

Besides, it is well to bear in mind the character of the greater number of the discourses delivered by the holy Fathers. These were simple homilies, or, catechetical instructions. This style of preaching* does not require the same amount of order and precision as the more formal discourses which are so generally delivered now-a-days. But, it is a great mistake to suppose, that even this kind of discourse does not demand careful preparation, more perhaps than it frequently receives; and the preacher will do well to bear in mind that, so far from being exempted from this preparation by the fact that his audience may be composed of ignorant and unlettered persons, he will, on this very account, be doubly bound to secure order and precision in his remarks, since, the more ignorant people are, the more difficulty they have in comprehending anything that is not laid before them in the clearest and plainest

* "The Pastor and His People." Part ii., chap. ii.

manner. For ordinary clergymen, with ordinary abilities and practice, there is only one way of securing this precious clearness and definiteness of speech, and that is by careful study and preparation.

Let us repeat, then, once more, that a most important point in the preparation of a sermon, and, above all, of an extemporary sermon, is the arrangement of our matter, the "utilis distributio rerum ac partium in locos," as Quintilian calls it.* Let us repeat, too, that by the "res," of which there is here question, we understand the leading idea of the discourse, as well as those great primary thoughts which are to dominate and govern it, those distinguishing features which will give its own proper character to the commencement, the body, and the conclusion of a sermon. So long as this end is secured; so long as the substance of his discourse stands forth sharp, clear, and well-defined, before the mind's eye of the preacher; so long as each member is seen to be in its own proper place, fulfilling its own proper function, and lending its own degree of strength to the body of which it forms a part; so long as that body itself presents a compact, graceful, and perfect contour to the gaze of him who has fashioned it and brought it into life; it matters but little by what means, or in

* Lib. vii. cap. 1.

accordance with what method, this result is obtained, and each one will do well to follow to a considerable extent, although with due prudence and discretion, the bent of his own taste and the promptings of his own genius on this point.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE TWO GREAT METHODS OF PRESENTING A SUBJECT—BY "PLAN," OR BY "VIEW"—OBVIOUS DANGER OF THE "FORMAL PLAN"—METHOD OF PROCEEDING BY "VIEW"—LACORDAIRE—THIS METHOD IS NOT SUITED TO MEN OF ORDINARY TALENTS—SUPERIOR ADVANTAGES OF THE "PLAN."

ALL possible methods or forms of arranging our matter eventually resolve themselves into two, and these we shall now briefly consider.

The more common and ordinary method of arranging our matter consists in the formation of a formal plan of the discourse which we propose to deliver—a plan which, whilst it will carefully avoid all undue formality or pedantic stiffness, will, nevertheless, arrange everything in its own proper place, will have the ideas of its introduction, its proposition, its arguments, exemplifications, and the broad details of the appeals to be addressed to the passions of the hearers, so clearly and definitely marked out as to provide the preacher with a shapely, compact, and well-knit skeleton on which

the mind's eye may rest without risk of mistaking one member for another, or confusing the whole. There is no need to speak of the confidence and absolute sense of security which the possession of such a skeleton imparts to the preacher; and hence it is little wonder to find that this method of arranging the matter of a discourse is the one which has ever been most generally followed. And, as we have said in another place,* this method is equally useful, whether we propose to write our sermon or to preach extempore; or, rather, whilst it is almost indispensable to him who writes, it is, in the opinion of many, absolutely so to him who extemporises. Amongst the moderns, Bourdaloue and Massillon, although cultivators of the more formal style which supposes careful writing and delivery from memory, and, in no sense of the word, extemporary preachers, are remarkable for the beauty and perfection of their plans. Massillon's sermons, "Sur la Vérité de la Religion," and "Sur la Passion," as well as Bourdaloue's discourse, "Sur la Loi Chretienne," are striking examples of this, and worthy of the most careful study by every one who desires to see for himself how perfectly order, clearness, and definiteness of aim may be secured without running to the extreme of stiffness and pedantry.

* "Sacred Eloquence."

For, it is pretty evident, that the great danger which awaits those who habitually make careful plans or skeletons of their sermons, and who learn to lean very much upon these plans, is that of stiffness and formality. Such preachers run a great risk of always composing their discourses in precisely the same manner, and that manner a very imperfect one. In fact, the sermon writers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as well as some of earlier times, often carried formality and mere method to such an excess in the arrangement of their discourses, that there has arisen a very decided, and, under the circumstances, not unnatural reaction; and now-a-days, men, discarding what they call formality and pedantry, are all in favour of taking "broad views" of their subject; a method which, if not always successful in its results, possesses at least the charm of novelty, and saves a preacher a great deal of time and labour.

Lacordaire was one of the most distinguished advocates and disciples of this new method; and his peculiar system, as well as the general bearings of the whole case, are so lucidly stated in an admirable article in a recent number of the Dublin Review,* that, without

* Dublin Review, Oct., 1870. "Lacordaire and the Conferences."

thereby endorsing or fully identifying ourselves with the writer's views on this particular point, we shall quote somewhat copiously from the article in question:—

"Perhaps there is nothing," he says, writing of Lacordaire, "in which he innovated so much, at least in the French pulpit, as in his manner of reasoning by 'views.' The scholastic way was to take a question, choose a side, and heap up arguments to prove the conclusion. The way of the ponderous sermon-writers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was radically the same, except that their proofs were often distorted by fantasy, bloated by impertinent matter, and nearly always overloaded with what, in small quantities, might have been tolerable. The great French preachers (perhaps S. Francis of Sales first set the example of short sermons at his epoch) cut down the huge growths of their predecessors, and made preaching an art. They preserved the method of the 'thesis,' but they added the graces of artistic imagery, and they showed the world what was meant by 'style.' They unfortunately succeeded too well. They created what must always be one of the drawbacks of excellent art—they created a 'groove' for their successors. A groove is composed of the accidental and secondary attributes of a great school of art. Every educated reader has an acquaint-

ance with French sermons. Every one knows numbers of them that are undeniably well written, learned, just, and polished. But there is hardly any one who has not been repelled by a certain uniformity, a kind of regimental 'set-up,' that seems to strangle the life out of them. It was a great change when Lacordaire dispensed with proposition and proof, and began to develop 'views.' A view is a truth taken up in a novel light, and carefully placed before the mental eye of the hearer, with all the clearness and brilliancy that can be given by artistic analysis, development, and illustration. In Lacordaire, the view by no means shuts out reasoning. On the contrary, there is no word which he uses more frequently than 'demonstration.' But the reasoning is the hidden thread on which the jewels are strung. Major and minor, antecedent and parallel, are no longer like the straight-sawn beams that a carpenter brings to build his shed for humanity to shelter in; but fresh boughs, with the leaves green and the fruit unplucked, that an artist masses into bowers of beauty. An essential of a 'view' is novelty. If a view is old or trite, it is not to be called a view, for it cannot impress the sense of the hearer. And Lacordaire was fortunate in novelty, and as bold as he was fortunate."

The able writer whom we have here quoted has put the case, about as strongly as it can be put, against the

old and more common method of arranging the matter of a sermon by means of a methodical plan to be carefully worked out. But he has said nothing of the obvious dangers which beset this new-fashioned method of "taking a view," nor of the excesses in this direction which have already called forth the reprobation of some of the ablest modern writers on sacred eloquence.

As the Abbé Bautain* says so well, although formerly the fault lay in the excess of the dialectical turn, by which men did much to spoil their sty leby dryness, heaviness, and an appearance of pedantry, still they knew how to state a question, and how to treat it. They knew at which end to begin it in order to develop it; and the line of argument which they distinctly marked out had at least the merit of leading straight to the object and to its conclusion. The fault now-a-days," he continues, "lies in the absence or deficiency of all method. Although they may understand it well enough, men remain a long time before their subject without knowing how to begin it. This leads to interminable preparations, to desultory introductions, to confused expositions, to developments as vague as they are disorderly, and, finally, to no conclusion, or, at least, to no conclusion that is practical or decisive. Nearly all

* "Extemporary Speaking." By M. Bautain.

the barriers," he proceeds, "which supported and directed human activity having been removed, liberty has become disorder, men leave the beaten track to walk, as they imagine, more at their ease; and, so far from gaining by it, they lose much of their time and their strength in seeking paths which they would have found from the first if they could have submitted themselves to discipline, and allowed themselves to be guided. Aspiring to think in their own fashion, or aiming at originality, they think at random, and just as ideas happen to come to them. The result is, for the most part, vagueness, oddity, and confusion. Now-a-days everybody seeks to speak of everything, and the natural result is, that, amid this torrent of divergent or irreconcilable words, the minds of men are tossed to and fro, without a notion whither they are going, just as the wind blows, or the current of the moment drives them."

The Abbé Mullois* is equally emphatic on this point. "It is all well enough," he says, "that a few eminent men should treat select questions before select audiences; but now everyone seems bent on talking philosophy, or on philosophizing about everything. We have the philosophy of theology, the philosophy of the

* "Cours d'Eloquence Sacrée."

sacraments, the philosophy of the liturgy: and to what does it all tend? To prove that God might have occupied a prominent place among the thinkers of these times; which would be proving very little in God's favour."

And, after all, how many men are there whose acquirements, self-control, strong common sense, and ready but disciplined powers of speech, fit them "to take views"? A Lacordaire may, perhaps, safely adopt such a style of preaching; but how many men are there who can safely afford to follow his example? The old-fashioned method of working out a set plan has undoubtedly its drawbacks. Unless managed with prudence and discretion, it is very apt to end in stiffness and tiresome formality; but even while labouring under this defect (which is by no means inherent or necessary to a plan), it still possesses one great and distinguishing prerogative: it enables a man to state a question, helps him to develop it, and, almost as a matter of necessity, and a very happy one, keeps him to the point. This "keeping to the point" is surely a great thing in a sermon; perhaps it is nearly everything so far as ordinary congregations are concerned; but of how many preachers who "take views" can it be predicated? What is novelty, novelty even of the most striking kind, in comparison with it? The strength of a sermon

does not consist in brilliant but disconnected ideas—in startling, but, most likely, vague and unpractical propositions. The discourse of the man, certainly of the ordinary man, who attempts to advance by way of "view," is almost sure to be fragmentary and disconnected. It is possible that these fragmentary members may be elegant, and even striking, in themselves; but, from the very fact that they are thus disconnected and fragmentary, they will never constitute really strong preaching, since the real strength of a sermon lies in the intimate relation, and the perfect agreement, of one part to another and to the whole. The composition of the ordinary man—for we repeat once more that we do not lay down rules for a Lacordaire or a Felix—who proposes to himself to "take views," is almost certain to lack that strict and logical sequence of ideas, of proofs, and of arguments, without which, resting upon the authority of St. Augustine,* we have no hesitation in saying that a sermon is essentially faulty. Such a preacher is as likely as not to say at the commencement of his discourse that which he should have reserved for the conclusion. Arguments depend for their effect upon the strict order and coherence which exists between them. The arguments of a man who does not clearly

* I. Epis., xviii.

see either the point from which he starts, or that to which he travels, who is carried away by every passing impulse, who is much more anxious to be novel and startling than simple and practical, are nearly certain to lack this order and coherence, and, lacking this, to be without vigour or strength.

We do not, of course, mean to assert that the man who theorizes, who takes new and startling views of things, may not preserve order and logical sequence of ideas in his discourse. No doubt Lacordaire was orderly and logical. But, we do believe most emphatically, that more ordinary men, men with fewer natural qualifications, men with more limited powers of thought, and more circumscribed opportunities of exercising those powers, will fail to secure these essential conditions, not only of really good, but even of tolerable speaking, if they attempt to travel by the same paths.

By all means then, when, once in a generation, a Lacordaire makes his appearance in the world, let him take his own way, and follow the bent of his own towering genius. Such a man is a born orator, and, like the poet, he is to be trammelled by no ordinary rules; although, it may be, that men, neither inferior in talent nor attainments, such as Massillon, have not disdained to raise the loftiest and most enduring monuments of their genius upon the foundation of these very same rules.

When a man like Lacordaire is called to preach to indifferent or unbelieving Frenchmen, the method by which they are to be attracted and retained to listen to the truth may safely be left to the inspirations of his own great intellect; and we may content ourselves with the expression of our gratitude that a man could be found with a genius to devise, and a tongue to develop, such a grand scheme of displaying the great truths of religion and morality, as should not only attract an audience, so exceptional and so strangely composed, by its novelty and its brilliant treatment, but, also win, at least some of them, to the service of God, by its earnestness and its loving zeal.

But, it by no means follows, that we should recommend ordinary men, in ordinary circumstances, to adopt, or even to attempt to cultivate, the same style of preaching. Such men must rely for their success upon a simple and instructive style: upon expression becoming him who speaks: upon doctrine sound in its source and logical in its form: and above all, upon instruction exactly adapted to the intelligence of the people, and calculated to promote in the most efficacious manner the correction of vice, as well as the development and advancement of solid virtue, amongst our hearers.

We believe that these results will rarely, if ever, be secured by an ordinary speaker in any other way than

by means of a well-conceived, a deeply-pondered, and a carefully-elaborated plan. Fully impressed by this idea, and firmly believing that this is the only method of preparing and arranging his matter which we can venture practically to recommend to the young preacher, we shall now proceed to consider the leading qualities of such a plan, and the principal defects to be avoided in its construction.

CHAPTER IX.

PLAN OF A DISCOURSE—GENERAL OBJECT OF THE PLAN AND ITS RELATION TO THE DISCOURSE—WHAT THE EDUCATED LAITY SAY OF THE ELOQUENCE OF THE PULPIT.

BEFORE proceeding to the consideration of the actual arrangement of the plan of a discourse, its leading qualities, and its principal defects, the young preacher will do well to review, yet once more, his knowledge and thorough appreciation of one or two of the primary ideas which must be carefully kept in view while studying this important matter.

In the first place, then, let him remember that a sermon is *something more* than a mere collection of disconnected thoughts, sentiments, or ideas, however touching or beautiful in themselves, upon a given subject; that it is a logical and closely reasoned discourse, having for its object the establishment and sustainment of one great leading practical truth, and employing for this end certain arguments, illustrations, and appeals which,

though they may differ from one another, will be so closely welded and linked together by one great chain of coherent unity as to contribute, in the strongest possible manner, to the common end.

Let him, in the second place, remember that his sermon will be *nothing more* than the development of one great leading practical truth, and that this truth, embodied in a plain practical proposition, to be enunciated more or less formally as circumstances may require or suggest, will thus form the foundation of his discourse.

Let him remember, thirdly, that, whilst the leading truth or idea to be presented will be essentially *one*, it may, and perhaps ought, be presented to his audience under *various* points of view; as when we prove the obligation of loving God from the threefold argument that He is our Creator, our Preserver, and our Redeemer. Let him remember, that, although these two or three leading arguments, or points of view, which will form the parts of his discourse, are, in themselves, in one sense, general propositions, inasmuch as they supply the foundation of special arguments and oratorical developments, they are, at the same time, on account of the strict coherence and connection which exists between them and the subject, resolved or merged in another proposition which is still more general, viz., that of the discourse itself.

With these leading ideas of the nature of a sermon clearly before our mind, let us now proceed to consider how we may arrange the matter of our discourse most effectively, and with the greatest practical result, by means of a careful and well devised plan.

At the moment when we have, whether it be directly or indirectly, conceived our subject, that subject stands out before us in one sense clearly, in another sense enveloped in a certain amount of obscurity.

We see clearly, and with the utmost distinctness, the one great leading idea, the one plain practical truth, which is to be carried home to the minds and hearts of our hearers. We see, too—although perhaps not quite so clearly—that the matter with which our course of reading has supplied us, the arguments, comparisons, illustrations, and sympathetic appeals, which have been carefully recorded in our notes, range themselves naturally and instinctively, so to speak, under two or three great leading heads. In other words, that they are referrible either to Sacred Scripture, to theology, or to reason and experience, but that, inasmuch as they have not yet been referred to their own proper heading, or put in their own proper place, a certain disorder and confusion, resulting in obscurity, exists amongst them. And it is the precise object of the plan of the discourse to get rid of this obscurity by thus putting everything

in its own place; so that, when we ascend the pulpit to extemporise, we may carry in our mind a clear and sharply defined skeleton of the discourse which we intend to deliver—a well regulated plan which shall at once lend that strength to our composition which ever springs from order and logical sequence of ideas, and that confidence to ourselves which is never wanting to any man who speaks with the conscious knowledge that he has something to say, something worth saying, and that he not only knows *what* he is about to say, but also *how* he intends to say it; or, in other words, the order and connection of his discourse—of one part with another and with the whole.

From all this, then, it follows plainly enough that by the plan of a discourse we understand the "utilis distributio partium in locos," or, to use the definition of an eminent writer on this subject, *the order of the things which have to be unfolded.* The "partes," the "things," already exist in our notes, or in our memory. But they exist, as we have just seen, in a more or less confused mass, and enveloped with more or less of obscurity. And it is the purpose and object of the plan to arrange them in that *order* in which they are to be unfolded. In other words: by the arrangement of the plan of our discourse is simply understood the taking of our pen in hand, and, with the principles presently to be enun-

ciated clearly before our minds, the orderly arrangement of the materials of our discourse under one, two, or three, great leading heads.

No doubt, all this appears very formal and pedantic on paper, but there is no necessity that, in its practical application, this orderly arrangement of our matter need partake in the least degree of these qualities. General principles, if clearly and definitely stated, nearly always appear stiff and formal in *theory*. General principles may be reduced to *practice* and employed with perfect ease, freedom, and grace.

And let the young preacher be perfectly certain that, as we have already said, the necessity of order in his discourse is simply absolute. It is a necessity which he can afford neither to overlook nor to neglect. No matter how beautiful or how carefully composed the various members of his discourse may be, they will, unless connected by a methodical and well devised plan, no more constitute a practical and useful sermon than wood and stones suffice to build a house until they are arranged and placed in order according to the plan of the architect. Many preachers fail. Some cover themselves with a shame and confusion, which is only surpassed by that of true and earnest friends who wished them well, but who are obliged to witness their discomfiture. Few succeed perfectly. And how is this?

Is it from want of talent, poverty of matter, or defects of style and delivery? We venture to say that, in the majority of cases, failure is to be attributed to none of these causes, so much as to the want of order and method, and the consequent absence of any definite end, aim, or object. It is too true that, in many of the discourses to which we listen, the preacher, as Whately sarcastically remarked, aims at nothing, and hits it. It is said often enough, and men of the world say it openly, without any attempt to conceal their sentiments on the matter, that there is too much preaching, such as it is, now-a-days. Now, we are not disposed to attach undue importance to what the educated laity, as they are called, say on these matters; for, as it has been well observed,* "many men do not care for sermons, or dislike them, because of their distaste in general for spiritual things. They are without real interest in the subject itself, and, hence, they pervert the use of sermons, looking upon them, as they do, altogether from a wrong point of view. Lacking interest in the subject, they turn their attention upon the manner, rather than the matter, of the discourse; they look upon the discourse as if it were intended to be, not speaking to the point on a practical subject, but a display of eloquence and artistic skill. If the style of the

* "Dublin Review," vol. xxxvi.

preacher, his language, or action, dissatisfies them, these men are dissatisfied with the sermon, because this is their idea of a sermon. They come away, and the reflections they make are not on the subject of the discourse — this escapes their notice — but simply and entirely on the skill of the preacher." But, whilst we take the opinion of these people simply for what it is worth, may we not, at the same time, fairly ask whether they are altogether wrong? What is the use of preaching unless it secure some object and gain some practical end, an end altogether different from the mere discharge of a duty by routine, or the filling up of a certain space of time? And, yet, is it altogether very wild, or very uncharitable, to assert that there are sermons which seem to have no other end or object than this? Does the Pére Albert speak the truth when he says that there are few preachers now-a-days who ever convert a sinner, simply because there are few who ever propose to themselves to do anything of the kind? Is it true, as he adds, that most preachers would be very much astonished if you informed them that one of their sermons had produced any such result? Is it true that men are frequently so taken up with the merely technical part of this important duty as to lose sight of the end and object of every good discourse, which is the instruction of our hearers, and the effectual moving of them to amend their lives?

If these things be true in any measure or degree, and we do not presume to assert that they are, it is little wonder that preachers should lose sight of order and definiteness of aim in their discourses; but it is less wonder still that such discourses should be without profit and result, or that the educated laity should daily grow more and more impatient of the teaching of the pulpit.

Let us, then, repeat once more, that if we would avoid failure, if we would secure our preaching from the adverse criticism of the educated laity — matters of comparatively little importance in themselves—if we would save souls by our preaching, and do the work of God as it ought to be done—a matter of very great importance—we must preach with order and method; and that a young preacher will hardly secure this order and method in any other way than by taking his pen in his hand and drawing up a plan or sketch of the discourse which he proposes to deliver. In no other way will he secure these most desirable results with equal ease and success.

CHAPTER X.

THE PLAN OF A DISCOURSE THE FRUIT OF DEEP THOUGHT AND OF MUCH REFLECTION—ESSENTIAL PROPERTIES OF A GOOD PLAN—ITS INFLUENCE ON SUCCESS.

AS we have sufficiently demonstrated in the preceding sections the absolute necessity of order and arrangement in every practically good discourse, and shown that ordinary men, in ordinary circumstances, will hardly secure this desirable result in any other way than by means of a clear and well digested plan, it follows as a natural consequence, that we now proceed to make some inquiry into the nature and essential qualities of such a plan.

The plan of a preacher holds precisely the same relation to the sermon which he proposes to preach as the plan of the architect holds to the edifice which he proposes to erect. Seizing the subject in its fruitful unity and in all its varied relations, a plan thus em-

braces it, whole, entire, and complete, in one grand coup-d'œil. If the plan of a discourse does not enable its author, or any intelligent observer, to perceive with one ready glance the idea to be realized, and the means for its realization, just as clearly as the plan of a material edifice enables the architect to do the same in his own way and from his own point of view, it is a failure. And from this idea of it the reader will see at once the nature, the utility, and the difficulty of forming such a plan.

Of its utility we have already said enough, at least by implication. Of its nature we shall presently speak more at length. It may not be amiss to say, in the first place, a few words of the difficulty which the young preacher may find in forming his plan according to the ideas just thrown out.

We have said above that a good plan, seizing the subject in its fruitful unity and its varied relations, enables the preacher to embrace that subject, wholly, entirely, and completely, in one grand coup-d'œil. But is it not plain that, although the difficulty will decrease with each succeeding effort which we may make, it will not be so very easy in the beginning to sketch such a plan as this. For it undoubtedly requires considerable grasp of mind, mental vigour, and practical experience, thus to be able to embrace at one quick glance, a sub-

ject in its entirety, and its relations. This faculty will most surely come, and very quickly too, to him who sedulously cultivates it; but it will not come without much careful and persevering cultivation. As Buffon remarks, we only arrive at this point after long habits of thought and reflection. And if many men never arrive at this point—if many men never acquire the invaluable faculty of analyzing and throwing matter into shape and order—it is because they never cultivate it. And in the fact that many men either do not appreciate, or do not cultivate this faculty, Girard finds the explanation of another fact, viz., that, although we meet many orators who can treat us to delicious and sparkling morsels, and who work out fragmentary details in a truly admirable manner, we find very few who are able to present us with a perfect *whole*. Here they fail; but, failing in this essential quality, the curse of sterility falls upon their happiest efforts, and upon their most sparkling and brilliant productions. Is not this what Horace means in his well known line?*—

"Infelix operis summa, quia ponere totum nesciet."

The young preacher must, then, struggle vigorously against the difficulty which he will find in his first

* Art Poet. 34.

attempts to grasp his subject in its entirety, and to arrange the materials of his discourse in due order and proportion. Let him make the effort boldly; let him persevere for a little time; and he will be astonished how soon the precious faculty will come to him. It is the fruit of labour; above all, it is the fruit of practice.*

Buffon asks the question how you are to teach a young preacher to form the plan of his discourse; and he answers that there is one great means above all others, viz., the habit of thought and reflection. And what he says is true, at least in a great measure and degree; for, as almost every subject will require to be treated in some special way and from some special point of view, it is evident that you cannot lay down any uniform rule or method, and that you must ultimately fall back upon that good sense, and that perfect

* I may remark here, since it has a very practical bearing on this subject, that I invariably oblige my pupils to make a careful and accurate synopsis of every sermon which they compose during their college course. And I do this for two reasons: firstly, to give them great readiness and facility of analyzing, and throwing into shape and order the matter which they read or write; and secondly, because I hope that these synopses of the sermons which they write in college will serve them as plans of extemporary discourses for the mission.—T. J. P.

taste, which are the precious fruits of long habits of thought and of much practical experience. But, at the same time, there are certain general principles, certain essential and inherent qualities of a plan, the knowledge and careful study of which will do much to assist the preacher. They will not supply him with the matter of his discourse, but they will aid him much to acquire an intelligent appreciation of it, as well in its fruitful unity as in the relations of the various parts to the whole. This knowledge will aid most effectually to keep him constantly under the guidance and the directing influence of good taste—that good taste which is one of the safest and most reliable handmaids of genius—which is, not unfrequently, a more valuable possession than genius itself.

These general principles, these inherent qualities, are, of course, pure essentials of the plan itself. They spring from its essence, they help to explain and elucidate its character, and they lead us into a more perfect knowledge of the nature of the plan as a whole, through our knowledge of its properties and fundamental qualities. But, their proper function ceases here, since they neither profess to supply us with the substantial matter of our discourse, nor with the tact, discretion, and good taste, with which that discourse is to be applied to the special necessities and requirements of our special audience.

The perfection, then, of every good plan will depend upon the due presence of certain qualities, essential to the plan itself, and derivable from its very nature; and these qualities are neatness and simplicity, a just proportion, and, above all, a fruitful unity.

The plan of a discourse should be *neat*—that is, it should be drawn out with such exactness, and with such an orderly and logical distribution of all its parts, as will enable its author to take in at a glance the one *end* to be gained and the *means* of gaining it. There will be nothing in this plan which will be obscure or doubtful; no feature of it which will not indicate something of importance. It will not embrace *many* great ideas; but each idea which it embraces will, in some degree at least, be a great one, and one which will contain in itself the source of many happy thoughts and of many fruitful inspirations. And, as the plan is, in the strictest sense of the word, the mere skeleton of the sermon, the rough draft which the skilful hand of the artist traces out in order to secure unity of view and of means before he begins to fill in the rich and varied details of his composition, it will, as a necessary consequence, be *simple*. It will admit of no style or fine writing. It will contain, not the *development* of fine ideas, but the *skeleton* of them. It will form the dry bones—strong, vigorous, and compact as you will, but

still the dry bones, which the skilful hand of the artist is presently to clothe with living flesh and muscle; and it will neither form, nor aim at forming, anything more.

The plan should be *duly proportioned;* that is to say, in sketching the plan of a discourse we should assign to each truth, to each great idea, and to each leading argument, that degree of prominence which is intrinsically or relatively due to it; so that there shall reign in the whole discourse a true and legitimate concord of its various parts, one to another, and to the whole.

This proportion and harmony, which contribute so powerfully to the beauty of a discourse, are doubly necessary to him who extemporises.* Unless the various parts of his discourse be duly proportioned beforehand, and strongly determined and marked out—unless he have put everything in its own place, and done this with such neatness, clearness, simplicity, and order, as never to lose sight of the great leading idea of his sermon—unless the plan be so arranged that, in its working out, the development of each great thought, and of each line of argument, lead him back to this parent idea—the extemporary preacher runs great risk of de-

* Bautain.

livering a discourse which will be much more remarkable for diffuseness, disorder, and confusion, than for the contrary qualities. Most preachers, rightly enough, propose to divide their discourse into three great parts, viz., introduction, body, and conclusion. But neglecting, or being unable, to proportion these parts duly, the result is a *monstrum horrendum*. Some spend nearly the whole time in beating about the bush, in labouring to break the ground and open up the subject; and the monster which they create is known by his enormous head. They never really get beyond the introduction. There are others who seem unable to finish—who never know when or how to wind up; and their creation is known by the length of his tail. There are others, who, forgetting that each argument or head of the discourse should be merely a development of the leading idea of the whole—forgetting that their secondary propositions or accessory thoughts have no real utility except what they derive from that leading idea—spend too much time, and dilate too much, upon those secondary propositions; and, doing this at the cost of the parent idea, they produce an excrescence which deforms and mars the beauty of the object whence it has its source. In all these, and many other cases of the like nature, the result is a monster, more or less deformed and out of due proportion. And this inconvenience is

only obviated by that strong previous determination of the various parts of the discourse of which we have just spoken. If the extemporary preacher would avoid becoming the author of one of the oratorical monsters described above, we repeat that he must trace the plan of his sermon with a firm and energetic hand, and he must arrange its various parts with such exactness and due proportion, that none of those unforeseen circumstances which so frequently occur during the delivery of an extemporary discourse will be able to lead him so far away from the main point, and from the order which he has previously arranged, as to involve him in confusion, or cause him to develop any one point at the expense of the others.*

Above and before all things else, a good plan will possess for its fundamental quality *unity*—a quality so essential, that without it the greater part of our preaching will be in vain. "Nothing," says Dr. Newman, "is so fatal to the effect of a sermon, as the habit of preaching on three or four subjects at once. I acknowledge," he continues, "I am advancing a step beyond the practice of great Catholic preachers, when I add, that even though we preach on only one at a time, finishing and dismissing the first before we go to the

* Bautain.

second, and the second before we go to the third; still, after all, a practice like this, though not open to the inconvenience which confusing of one subject with another involves, is in matter of fact nothing short of the delivery of three sermons in succession, without break between them."*

To secure, then, this fundamental quality, the young preacher must follow the advice of Dr. Newman, and other eminent writers, on this matter. He must place before himself a distinct categorical proposition, such as he can write down in a form of words, and guide and limit his preparation by it, and aim in all he says to bring out this, and nothing else.

In other words, there is unity in a discourse when everything in it tends to the establishment of some *one, precise,* and *clearly defined* proposition, which the preacher proposes to himself to impress so deeply upon the hearts of his hearers that they cannot possibly escape the practical conclusions which he will deduce from it—when all the proofs, examples, illustrations, etc., which his sermon contains will, however varied they may be in themselves, have ultimate reference to the development of the one great leading idea which is embodied in the proposition of his discourse.

* "University Education."

A unity such as this, at once simple and fruitful, comprises, as is evident, two things—unity of *view*, and unity of *means*.

Unity of View

There must be unity of view in a discourse; and this quality is secured when, no matter how circuitous the route may be, everything in the sermon tends to one common end, viz., the establishment of the one parent idea embodied in the proposition; when every phrase in the sermon has some reference to this object; when everything which is neither necessary nor useful for this purpose is carefully eliminated; when, in fine, from this common end, as from a central point, we can embrace, in one glance of the eye, the whole sermon with all its ramifications. These ramifications may, of course, include various points, or heads, or arguments, or whatever you may wish to call them; but it must be ever borne in mind that when we thus employ several points, we do so, not in order to prove two or three different truths, but as two or three different ways of proving one truth. Hence, it is always easy to tell whether the plan of our sermon possesses unity. *Let us see whether it is reducible to a syllogism.* We should probably act very foolishly did we attempt to announce our subject to the *audience* under the syllogistic form, since such a mode of action would savour of intolerable pedantry and formality; but we ought generally to be able

to render an account of it to *ourselves* from this point of view. Suppose that we were preaching on the end of man, and that we took as the parent idea of our discourse the sentiment, "That it should be the great object of every sensible man to secure his salvation," there would certainly be nothing unduly formal and pedantic in announcing our subject in the following shape, although it contains, as the logician will see at a glance, the germ of a perfect syllogism:—

"All reasonable men labour most earnestly for that which is most worthy of their toil. Now, whether we consider (1) the views of God in creating, redeeming, and preserving man; or (2) the actions, lives, and penances of the saints; or (3) the sentiments of different classes of men at the hour of their death; we must necessarily admit that the securing of his salvation is the one great object most worthy of the attention of every reasonable man."* Let us, then, repeat, that unity of view imparts this remarkable and invaluable property to a discourse, viz., that it reduces it to one leading proposition, which is merely brought out into greater relief by the *various ways* in which it may be presented to an audience. Fenelon expresses the same idea when he says that the discourse is merely the de-

* "Sacred Eloquence." Chap. 4, sec. 4. 3rd edition.

velopment of the proposition, whilst the proposition is nothing more than an abridgment of the discourse.

Let us repeat, too, that although such a plan may appear stiff and formal on paper, it need not be so in the least degree when developed and reduced to practice in the hands of an experienced orator; whilst it is so necessary to success that, without it, a preacher will ordinarily produce little or no result. The mass of hearers are equally unable and unwilling to follow or pick up disconnected and disjointed ideas, which have no direct reference to some one great plain practical truth which is supposed to be before them, claiming their attention, enlisting their sympathies, and persuading them to reformation of life and manners. His intelligence is very limited indeed who is not able to detect the wanderings of a preacher who speaks without order and logical sequence of ideas, and who says many things which have no direct bearing on the subject in hand. However humble the hearer may be, he is, not rarely, quick to take offence when the preacher thus presumes upon his patience and intellectual capacity. In such circumstances, looking, naturally enough, upon the speaker as a traveller who has either forgotten, or who knows not whither he is going, the hearer loses all interest in the discourse, and, of course, receives no benefit from it. And it is unnecessary to add that these inconveniences are increased a thousandfold

when there is question of an intelligent and educated audience.

Nor is it sufficient that what we say have some relation to the general end of the discourse, or be comprehended, in a degree more or less vague, within the unity of view. Quintilian asks what it is that constitutes a strong and vigorous body, and he answers, that it is the union and perfect agreement of all the members. "Displace but one member," says he, "and the beautiful body becomes a monster." It is just the same with a sermon. Its strength and its beauty arise, as we have already remarked more than once, not from disconnected and disunited members, no matter how elegant they may be in themselves, but from the intimate relation, and the perfect agreement, of one part to another and to the whole. The arrangement of a discourse is perfect when each argument, and each leading idea, is so placed, with such strict order and coherence, that no one can be omitted without causing a fatal gap, without destroying, more or less completely, the vitality of the whole. When such order is wanting, the preacher frequently commences with that which should not have made its appearance until the middle of the discourse; or, he ends where he ought to have begun. Therefore, a good plan does not merely secure unity of view, but it also secures unity of means. And

there is unity of means in a discourse when all its parts, arguments, and illustrations, are so united, connected, and arranged, that the preacher continually advances on the same line of progressive conceptions; when his sermon is one tissue of ideas and sentiments which succeed and follow each another. In a sermon of this kind everything is in its proper place. The educated hearer follows such a preacher with delight and satisfaction—the humblest of his audience is able to penetrate his line of argument with ease. Each truth that is put forward, whilst preparing the way for some other truth which has equal need of its support, at once introduces and sustains it. Thus sustaining each other, they all unite in conducting the audience to the common end in such a manner, and with such an intimate and close connection, that no one of these leading ideas can be *omitted* without injuring the order of the march—not one of them *misplaced* without weakening, at least in some degree, the force, and destroying the harmony, of the whole discourse.

By a close, but, at the same time, easy and sensible application of these great principles, we shall secure for our discourse that unity, at once simple and fruitful, which St. Augustine declares to be the principle and form of everything that is living and beautiful. *Omnis pulchritudinis forma unitas est.*

CHAPTER XI.

PROXIMATE PREPARATION OF THE SERMON—THE PREACHER AT WORK—HOW TO PARCEL OUT THE WEEK IN THE MOST USEFUL AND PRACTICAL MANNER—PLAN OF A SERMON.

WE have now conducted the young preacher to a very important stage of his preparation, viz., that in which he takes his pen in hand, and sketches out a clear, sharp, bold plan of the discourse which he proposes to deliver.

If we suppose, as will, indeed, be generally the case, that he has only a week in which to prepare his discourse, he should have arrived at this stage of his preparation not later than the Thursday previous to the Sunday on which he has to preach. It will be all the better if he can arrive thither on Wednesday, and there is no reason why he should not; for, although, no doubt, the amount of preparation through which we have conducted him looks formidable enough on paper,

he will, at all events in a little time, find it simple and easy enough in practice.

And, before we commence to parcel out his daily work in this direction for him, let us most earnestly and emphatically recommend the young preacher to begin to prepare his sermon as early as possible in the week. In ordinary circumstances, and, of course, making allowance for unforeseen contingencies, which will arise from time to time, to interfere with our most careful and precise arrangements, there are few men who would not be able to prepare their sermons properly, if they would only commence in time. But, unfortunately, this preparation is put off from day to day. Monday and Tuesday, the days on which the generality of priests have most leisure, are allowed to slip away unheeded. As likely as not, under the circumstances, Wednesday is as void of preparation as Monday and Tuesday. Thursday may bring sick-calls which we could not foresee, or occupations for which we were not prepared; and, in any case, it is getting so late in the week that it is hardly worth while commencing now. At all events, if Thursday be passed, farewell to any preparation worthy of the name. Friday and Saturday are days in the life of most missionary priests which do not afford much leisure time for serious study, or for any other occupation than

the discharge of the more active and laborious duties of the sacred ministry. In the arrangement, then, of his various duties, and most of all, perhaps, in the preparation of his sermon, let the young and zealous priest guard most carefully against the fatal habit of "putting off;" a habit which is the most deadly enemy of everything in the shape of order, regularity, and prudent discharge of priestly obligations; a habit which, if it be once indulged, grows upon a man so rapidly and imperceptibly as to overthrow his best resolutions and his most earnest desires, and at last establishes itself in his nature, with a firmness of hold, and a tyrannical grasp of power, that render him, if not positively impotent for good, at least the slave of those half resolves, those miserable velleities, which never produce any result worthy of a man or a priest.

After these preliminary observations, we now propose, with all deference and respect, to endeavour to show the young preacher how he is practically to apply the principles which we have laid down in the previous chapters of this essay, to the composition or preparation of his extemporary discourse. And this is the manner in which we recommend him to proceed:—

Let him as early as possible on Monday select and fix upon the subject of his sermon for the ensuing Sun-

day. He will, of course, be governed in this selection by the principles at which we have already glanced. He will take as the subject of his discourse either the Epistle or Gospel for the day, probably the latter: some virtue which he may find it especially incumbent upon him to inculcate at that time: or some vice which it may be necessary to denounce: or, he will be influenced and controlled in his selection by the recurrence of some great Festival of the Church, or the anniversary of some great saint. Let him reflect for a few moments on what we may call, *the circumstances of the week*, and then let him select, with one energetic, rapid determination of his will, the subject of his discourse, and *let him stick to that*. Let him not spend half the morning in useless deliberations, changing his mind again and again, and perhaps eventually fixing upon no subject at all. It is better for him in the circumstances to select his subject at once, and, although it may be less powerful in itself, to adhere to that, than to lose half, or the whole of his day, in selecting first one subject and then another, until, so to speak, he becomes bewildered. If a man have to preach on a great occasion, with ample time in which to prepare, he, no doubt, will do well not to fix upon his subject until he has devoted a few days to its general consideration. The missionary who must

preach every week, perhaps oftener, has not time for this.

Having selected his subject, let him set to work to "read up" steadily on the matter, pencil in hand, according to the method which we have ventured to suggest, or any better and more suitable one which he may be able to discover for himself. And, again we presume to hint that, of all the days in a priest's week, Monday is the best on which to "read up" for his sermon. Nor do we mean by this course of reading to deprive him of that fair share of rest and recreation which many clergymen are accustomed to allow themselves, with great reason and sufficiency of cause, after the heavy labours of the preceding day. For, if a priest can lay his hand at once upon the book which he requires, this "reading up" for his sermon need not be a very formidable matter. To a man who has gone through a regular course of logical training, and to whom, in consequence, the habit of analysis, synopsis, and general condensation, and orderly arrangement of matter, should be a work of ease and facility; to a man whose mind is habitually well stored with that exact and definite theological knowledge which every priest, by his very profession, is supposed to possess; to a man who is supposed to be no less well made up in ascetical theology and the principles of the spiritual life, in so

far, at least, as they are necessary for the proper discharge of the sacred duties of the confessional, and the direction of souls; to such a man, we assert, a very short time spent in revising his knowledge, or in gathering new ideas from the perusal of some good, solid work, ought to be amply sufficient for the object in view. It is difficult to imagine how one hour's steady reading, more especially after a little practice, will not suffice to furnish him with most abundant and solid materials for his Sunday's discourse. Surely there are few clergymen who cannot find one or two hours in the week to devote to a duty at once so useful, so important, so holy, and so obligatory. And, yet, we are grievously tempted to add that there are at least some sermons delivered, let us hope not many, which would have appeared in a very different guise, and with a vastly more pleasing face, if their authors had devoted even one short hour to the serious preparation of them.

Having given Monday to "reading-up," let the preacher devote Tuesday to the "meditation and conception" of his subject. This is a matter which need cost him but very little trouble. As he goes about his ordinary business, visiting his sick, or taking his walk, let him, now and again during the day, turn the subject of his sermon, and the matter of his reading on the previous day, quietly over in his mind. Let him

meditate it in accordance with the principles already laid down. Above, and before all, let him strive to grasp that one parent idea, which is to give unity, efficacy, and life to his discourse. Let him grasp clearly the *one thing* which he is going to say; the one thing upon which he intends to insist; the one thing which he proposes to himself to drive home to the hearts and consciences of his hearers. Let him grasp this one great parent idea with all his might and main; let him fix it so deeply in his mind that nothing may be able to disturb it, or weaken the hold that it has taken of him. Let "What he is going to say," and, "How he is going to say it," stand out clearly, sharply, distinctly, and readily, before his mind's eye, and all the rest will be as nothing. When he has arrived at this point, he may almost venture to say that his sermon is ready, that his preparation is virtually finished. It will surely not be very difficult to arrive at this point. The difficulty would seem to be, how an educated man can possibly spend an hour or two in reading and meditating any subject, certainly any professional subject, with a view to addressing his fellow men upon it, without arriving at some clear, definite, and practical conclusions on the matter. It would seem almost impossible to conceive an educated and intellectual man bringing the powers of his mind to bear

upon a subject, at once so sacred, so practical, and so full of sympathy, as a sermon, without deriving from the consideration of it, at least one great idea, one idea which will be no less fruitful in its results than in its conception. Still, whatever may be said on this point, it is quite certain that to the man who thus really meditates his subject, and who, through this meditation of it, thus conceives it, the next stage in his formal preparation will follow almost as a matter of course, and one in which he will experience neither annoyance nor disappointment.

Having devoted Monday to reading-up, and Tuesday to the meditation and conception of his subject, let the preacher now proceed confidently to this next step in his preparation. With the materials which he has prepared, ready to his hand—with the leading idea of his discourse vividly present to his mind—let him, on Wednesday, if possible, but certainly not later than Thursday, take his pen, and on half a sheet, or a sheet of paper, sketch out a bold, vigorous, and practical plan of the sermon which he proposes to deliver. Never losing sight of the essential idea of a plan, that it is the "utilis distributio," "the order of the things to be unfolded," he will, with a few vigorous strokes of his pen, arrange the materials of his discourse, put everything into its proper place, group his various arguments,

illustrations, etc., around their parent idea, and having done this, he will find, ready to his hand, a skeleton so plastic, so symmetrical, so instinct with the principles of energy and life, that he will experience little or no difficulty, when the proper moment shall have arrived, in clothing these dry bones with the flesh and blood of living words.

In the composition of his plan he will probably proceed in some such way as this. First, he will write down the text of Scripture most appropriate to head his sermon. Then, will follow, clearly, sharply, and distinctly expressed in a few words, the leading idea of his discourse, that idea which will presently be embodied in the proposition. Next, from a general view of the whole discourse which he proposes to deliver, and the method of its treatment, he will obtain the idea of his introduction or exordium, and this he will put down in a few terse words. The exordium or introduction naturally conducts him to the proposition of his discourse, and this he will write out as clearly and distinctly as possible, not indeed with a view of unfolding it to his audience in the same precise formal manner in which he may have drawn it up, but for his own guidance and direction. This proposition will include and embody the leading idea of his sermon, together with the members of his division, or the parts

of his discourse. Whilst it avoids undue formality and pedantic stiffness, the proposition will, nevertheless, be expressed, both in the discourse itself, and *a fortiori* in the plan, as briefly as possible; and, in every really orderly sermon, it will, as a general rule, directly or indirectly, be *reducible* to a syllogism, although we repeat that it will not, and ought not, be so expressed. Having thus written out the proposition of his discourse, he will next arrange the members of his division, the first, second, or third points, as they are usually called; only let him bear in mind that it is not *necessary* that a sermon should have more than one point. But if, as is usually the case, the sermon contains several points or members, he will arrange each one in its own proper place, with its own peculiar arguments and oratorical developments, illustrations, etc., briefly and clearly sketched out; so that each one may present itself to his mind's eye, during the delivery of the discourse, at the very moment when he requires it. Finally, from a general view of the whole discourse, he will consider, and briefly note down, those sentiments, powerful emotions, and generous resolutions, with which he will seek to move the hearts of his hearers at the close of his sermon. In other words, he will obtain the matter of his peroration or conclusion.

Such, briefly, is some idea of the method which, *positis ponendis*, making all allowances for individual tastes,

most preachers will follow in sketching the plan of a discourse. One man may, of course, develop it at greater length than another—one man may content himself with the merest skeleton, whilst another will fill in the details of his sketch with considerable fulness; but, however much a man may follow the bent of his own taste, and he will wisely do so in some matters, the broad leading features of the plan will probably be substantially the same in most, if not in all cases.

For the further elucidation of this important matter, and to assist the young preacher in reducing principles to practice, we subjoin the plan or skeleton of a sermon on mortal sin.

Plan of a Sermon on Mortal Sin.

Text.—Delicta quis intelligit?—*Ps.* xviii. 13.

Leading Idea.—There is only one real evil in the world, the evil of mortal sin, but inasmuch as this is an evil of infinite enormity, we are bound to avoid it by every consideration which can appeal to the heart of man.

Introduction.—If there be only one real evil in the world, but if that evil be one of infinite malice and enormity—the source of all other evils—and if the name of this sovereign evil be mortal sin—we

should, if we were really Christian men, be seized with horror and confusion to think that we had dared thus to offend God.

If we could but conceive a true idea of the nature of sin—we should, instead of drinking in sin like water, be penetrated with the greatest horror of it—*Ps.* xviii. 13. Instead of spending our lives in thoughtless folly—*Jerem.*, xii. 11—we should meditate upon the law of God day and night—*Ps.* i.

We should be astonished that all creatures do not rise up to avenge the insult offered by sin to God, the Creator and Sovereign Lord of all.

PROPOSITION.—Let us then conceive the greatest horror of sin—let us persuade ourselves that whether we view it (1) as an offence of God, or (2) as the greatest injury which we can do to ourselves, or (3) as the most egregious folly of which we can be guilty, it is the one real evil of the world, and the one, therefore, which every sensible man will do his utmost to avoid.

FIRST POINT.—Mortal sin is the deepest and most deadly insult which a *creature* can offer to his *creator*. "Delicta quis intelligit?" To realize its enormity we must consider the quality of the person offended, of the person offending, and the

vileness or worthlessness of the object on account of which it is offered. By these circumstances the morality of the action must be measured.

The person to whom the insult is offered is God, the infinite wisdom and perfection, the sovereign ruler and master of the world: "Quis sicut Deus?"

He by whom the insult is offered; he who says "Non serviam," *Jerem.*, ii. 20; he who rejects his lawful sovereign and master, "Nolumus hunc regnare super nos," *Luc.*, xix. 14; is a mere worm of the earth, depending upon God for the very breath of his life. "Nihilum armatum et rebelle"—*St. Amb.*

The object for which he thus outrages God is worthless—a mere nothing—a momentary gratification, not unfrequently disgusting in its very nature: "Oderunt me gratis"—*Ps.* xxxiv.

Sin, therefore, in one sense, is of infinite malice; it outrages the infinite majesty of God. Hence St. Thomas maintains that the wisdom of God, all infinite as it is, could not invent a punishment adequate to the enormity of mortal sin: "Delicta quis intelligit?"

SECOND POINT.—The commission of mortal sin is the greatest injury which we can do ourselves.

It reduces us to a state of absolute and terrible

spiritual indigence: "Egressus est a filia Sion omnis decor ejus"—*Thren.*, i. 16.

It deprives us of sanctifying grace—robs us of our hopes of Paradise—causes us to forfeit all the merits which we may previously have acquired—renders even our best actions fruitless "in ordine ad meritum supernaturale." "Nescis quia tu es miser"—*Apoc.*, xiii. 17. It renders us the victims of undying and ceaseless remorse of conscience. It exposes us daily and hourly to the terrible risk of an unprovided death, and consequently to eternal damnation. "Stulte hâc nocte animam tuam repetunt a te"—*Luc.*, xx.

THIRD POINT.—Mortal sin is the greatest folly of which we can be guilty: "Furor illius sicut . . aspidis obturantis aures suas"—*Ps.* v.

By the habit of sin the heart is hardened. God seeing his choicest graces despised or abused gradually withdraws, and leaves the sinner to himself—"Derelinquamus eam"—*Jer.* li. It leads to despair—"Desperantes seipsos tradiderunt in operationem immunditiæ omnis"—*Eph.* iv. Each succeeding sin renders the sinner more and more helpless, bad habits acquire a firmer hold, and a greater mastery over him, till at length he falls into—*Final Impenitence* He dies as he lived—his last

act upon earth is a new outrage against God—the assistance of the priest, the sacraments of the Church, are equally fruitless to rescue him from the terrible state of reprobation into which God has allowed him to fall, in punishment of his prevarications. He dies, and is buried in hell—"Iniquitates suæ capiunt impium"—*Ps.*, v. 22. And all this is the fruit of sin. What folly! What blindness! What utter madness! Who shall measure it?—"Delicta quis intelligit"?

CONCLUSION.—If such be the dreadful results of mortal sin, shall we not, if we be wise, examine most seriously the state of our conscience on this point? If our conscience bear witness against us, shall we not resolve to emancipate ourselves at once from this dreadful thraldom? Shall we not have immediate recourse to the Sacrament of Penance? Shall we not resolve henceforward to look upon mortal sin as the greatest evil in the world, and, as a necessary consequence, do our utmost to avoid it? Act of Contrition, or Fervent Prayer to Jesus Christ.

In some such manner as this will the preacher sketch out the skeleton or plan of his discourse. The above plan is probably more elaborate and lengthy than would be required, or would even be useful for an ordinary instruction. Simple as it may read, the preacher

would most likely find that it would take him a very considerable time to develop, and put into his own words, the ideas thrown out in this plan. Perhaps, he might find that it would be quite as much as he could do to develop any one point of this plan in twenty or twenty-five minutes; and if he be wise, he will not, on ordinary occasions, attempt to pass this limit. And, although we do not by any means presume to propose this plan to him as a perfect, or nearly perfect model, we venture to think that there is no idea in it which is not practical, which will not admit of solid amplification, and of much fruitful application, and solid instruction. He will see that it contains *no writing*, and no flights of rhetoric; that it merely presents him with *substantial ideas*, the clothing and rhetorical filling-in of which is left to each individual's taste and style. He will see that it is a mere skeleton, but a skeleton which can be easily clad in living flesh and blood; and he will see, too, that it possesses the quality of unity, since every idea it contains tends, more or less directly, to the development and establishment of the great parent idea of the whole, *the infinite enormity and evil of mortal sin.*

The preacher having thus prepared his plan, and having arrived at this point, let us say on Wednesday or Thursday, all that now remains is to get this plan firmly fixed in the mind. During the remaining days

of the week, therefore, let him, for this purpose, review his plan from time to time. Let him endeavour to realize and conceive, in the clearest and most precise manner, the connexion and bearing of the entire discourse, of its various parts with one another and with the whole. In other words, let him strive to write in his mind the plan which he has already written on paper, and this with such clearness and precision, that, at the time of delivery, each idea may present itself at the very moment it is needed. If he "possess" his plan perfectly, he will grasp it, whole and entire, in one vigorous mental glance, and, thus possessing it, he will be able to bring each part into play in the most effectual manner. He will never for a moment lose sight of the great parent idea, the vivifying principle of life and strength in the discourse. He will be able to bring each argument and illustration to bear with the most striking and conclusive results. He will never falter or break down. Order, the pervading principle of his plan, will be equally the pervading principle of the realization of that plan. Each member of his division, and each leading idea, argument, or illustration contained in that member, will present itself to his mind's eye promptly and readily at the moment of delivery, in all due order and regular progression, to be clothed in those strong, earnest, or pathetic words,

which most surely will not fail him who has thus carefully prepared himself to speak with glory to God, with advantage to his neighbour, and with credit to himself.

If the plan be sketched sufficiently early in the week; if it be clear, precise, and, above all, not too long or elaborate; it cannot possibly give the preacher much trouble or difficulty thus to fix and engrave it on his mind.

CHAPTER XII.

THE PREACHER IN THE PULPIT—REALIZATION OF HIS PLAN—HOW TO INTRODUCE HIS SUBJECT—THE PRACTICE OF EMPLOYING A WRITTEN EXORDIUM AND OTHER CHOICE MORSELS OF ELOQUENCE IN AN EXTEMPORARY DISCOURSE.

WE have already conducted the preacher through the various stages involved in the preparation of his discourse. Let us now accompany him into the pulpit to witness the realization of his plan—the perfecting of those conceptions which are, as yet, in one sense, barren and dead—those conceptions which are to be rendered living and potent by the words in which he is about to clothe and present them to his hearers.

We will suppose the supreme and culminating point of his preparation to have arrived. In a few moments more he will be face to face with his audience, strong in the feeling that he is moulding and welding them to his will, or wretched in the conviction that his words are falling upon an unfruitful soil, that he is merely

beating the air to no purpose, that he has failed to secure the attention, or to enlist the sympathies, of those who must perforce listen to what he says, but who show by their gestures and their bearing how unwillingly they do so.

It is an important, a decisive moment, one which may well inspire even the most finished orator with fear and trembling. Let, then, the preacher once more collect himself for a few moments, that thus he may concentrate all the energies of his mind and body on the task before him. Let him summon to his aid the undivided powers of his intellect and imagination; let him fix them once again upon the end to be gained, upon the plan to be realized, and the manner in which it is to be realized; and thus holding, so to speak, his soul in his hand, let him enter the pulpit with a boundless confidence in God, with a calm, cheerful, and modest reliance on himself, with an earnest, honest determination to do his best, and with no misgivings as to the result.

The sermon in its realization will be broadly comprised in three great leading parts: the introduction, the body of the discourse, and the conclusion.

Let the student refresh his memory as to the object and nature of an exordium or introduction, and the means it employs to gain its end. He will remember

that the exordium is merely a becoming introduction of the subject, having for one of its principal objects to dispose our hearers to receive favourably that which we are about to say, with a view, of course, to their ultimate conviction and persuasion. *Reddere auditores benevolos, attentos et dociles.* He will remember, too, that, as this threefold end is attained in various ways, and by different means, according to the nature of the subject, and the dispositions of his hearers, there are different kinds of exordiums, each one possessing its own peculiar qualities, and governed by its own peculiar rules.

It cannot be doubted that there are occasions on which the exordium *ex abrupto* will be very telling, and should be employed. Again, a man may open his sermon in a very effective manner by laying down some striking proposition, or by advancing some startling paradox, which will at once arrest and enchain the attention of the hearers.

But, in ordinary circumstances, the exordium of the extemporary discourse is one of the simplest things imaginable, since it merely aspires to introduce the subject in the plainest possible manner, giving us a glimpse of the great broad ideas which are to dominate the discourse, and the order of the arrangement which is to be laid down and followed. Still, even in this

case, the introduction is not without difficulties peculiar to itself, and occasionally of sufficiently distressing a nature.

When a man has written his exordium, and committed it to memory, he comes forward with a great deal of confidence, and, notwithstanding the inevitable distractions which attend the first few moments of his appearance in the pulpit, his introductory remarks will always be finished and complete, and not unfrequently they will form the most brilliant part of his discourse.

But it is vastly otherwise with him who extemporises. Oppressed by the emotions which are inseparable from the circumstances in which he finds himself placed; carrying all his ideas in his brain, and trusting, as he does, to the inspiration of the moment for the words in which to express them; it is no wonder if he is weak, even somewhat obscure, in the beginning. He probably finds a difficulty in speaking at all; what wonder, then, if he finds it still more difficult to speak to the point? Unless he have previously fixed upon a few, simple, clearly defined words with which to commence, he will perhaps hesitate, even if he does not stammer and grow confused, during the first moments of his discourse. And, so vividly do they realize this difficulty of making a good start, that some preachers, who content themselves with merely preparing a skeleton or

plan of the rest of their discourse, carefully write their exordium, and commit it to memory. But, great as the difficulty of starting well may be, this remedy is one which we can scarcely recommend, although we do not pretend to assert that those who are able to avail themselves of it with success, if such there be, should not do so.

It seems to us that the man who has not such command of himself and his faculties, and such a supply of words, as to be able to utter the few sentences which will serve to introduce his subject, will hardly be able to preach extempore at all. Were such a man to write his exordium, and commit it carefully to memory, it seems to us that there must necessarily be such a glaring discrepancy between this portion of his discourse, smooth, glib, and fluent, and that which will follow, rough, hesitating, and confused, as must be infinitely embarrassing to the preacher himself, whilst it will be painfully apparent to his hearers. The Abbe Bautain remarks that the true orator does not employ this process, and hardly finds it answer when he has recourse to it; since, in these circumstances, he generally entangles himself, gets confused, and fares worse than if he had spoken extempore. The man who is able to preach, perhaps fluently, from a skeleton, will surely be able to utter the few sentences that will serve to

introduce his discourse. The very difficulty of commencing, and the innate consciousness which he has of this difficulty, will give an air of modesty to his bearing as he enters the pulpit, and a gentle, subdued, and Christian character, as well to his voice as to his whole manner, which constitute some of the leading qualities of a good exordium, and which will do more to propitiate his audience favourably towards him than the delivery of an introduction whose glibness and self-possession will not be warranted and maintained by the rest of the discourse. Those morsels of eloquence, and those choice bits which are carefully prepared and blended here and there with what is purely extemporary, in order to give brilliancy and additional effect to the discourse, will generally prove embarrassing rather than really useful to him who can speak any way fluently and well; whilst to the man of inferior attainments, and of more humble aspirations, they will be positively injurious, since they will impart a style and character to his introduction that will not be sustained by the remainder of the discourse, which, instead of continually advancing in vigour and strength, according to the golden rule of Cicero, *Ut augeatur semper et increscat oratio,* will gradually grow weaker and more feeble.

It will, then, be much better for the preacher to have confidence in himself, and to open his discourse with a

few simple words, which he can scarcely find much difficulty in framing. Let him have the great leading idea of his discourse clearly and vividly present to his mind, and he will easily find the words, plain, simple, and earnest, with which to lead the way to its enunciation. It is quite possible that these words, as well as the voice in which they are uttered, may be somewhat weak and faltering in the opening, but let him persevere, strong in the conscious rectitude of his intention, and his trust in God, and in a moment all will be changed. He will scarcely have pronounced a couple of sentences before his confusion will have vanished, and he will stand, a man, face to face with his subject, its master and its ruler. Thus face to face with his subject, grappling the great idea which, with all the enthusiasm of the true orator, he burns to manifest and bring home to the hearts and minds of the multitude whose eyes are fixed in rapt attention full upon him, he at once feels within his heart the ardent glow of earnestness, of enthusiasm, of inspiration. The light which illumines his soul will show itself in his eyes, in every feature of his face, and will lend its character and influence to the very tones of his voice. In a word, he will realize in all its fulness the great and consoling idea that he is master of the situation. Strengthened by the consciousness that he is thoroughly prepared, and

that the materials of his discourse, plain, clear, orderly, and well-defined, are ready at hand, and cannot possibly fail him, he will launch into his sermon with a confidence which will grow stronger as he proceeds, and with a success which will receive its consummation and its crown only when the last word of his discourse shall have been uttered.

The young preacher, then, will commence his sermon in a calm, quiet voice, and with, as far at least as this may be, unruffled self-possession. He will commence in a calm, quiet tone of voice, for he will remember that he has yet a long way to go, and that if he is to arrive at the end of his journey with sufficient energy remaining to him to throw that fire and spirit into his peroration without which it cannot succeed, he must carefully husband his resources in the beginning of his discourse. Young and inexperienced speakers not unfrequently commence on their very highest note, and with all the fire and energy which they can command. The consequence is, that they become utterly exhausted before the discourse is half over; they gasp for breath, and cling to the pulpit for support; and those concluding sentences which should have rung with thrilling force and effect through the church, which should have awakened the unconcerned, and animated the ardent with the highest and most holy resolves, are often

expressed in tones so low, so feeble, and so utterly spiritless, as to fall vapid, cold, and dead upon the ears of an unconcerned and unsympathetic audience. But, if he begin calmly and quietly, not elevating his voice above the emphatic and distinct conversational tone, he will be able, as he proceeds, to let himself out, to adapt himself to the requirements of his subject and his audience. He will thus escape that unpleasant prejudice which is nearly always excited against a speaker who commences by getting into a passion without any conceivable reason, and at the same time reserve to himself sufficient energy and strength to conclude with earnest warmth and due effect.

The exordium of the ordinary Sunday discourse will, as a general rule, be nothing more than a brief, simple, and modest explanation of the Gospel or Epistle for the day, with a glance at the precise lesson or instruction to be derived from it. This explanation can scarcely, *positis ponendis*, be too brief, whilst in all ordinary circumstances it can most assuredly never be too simple. There is no room here for laboured figures of speech, for cumbersome oratorical display, for crafty self-seeking, which is only half hidden under a flimsy veil of mock humility, and of transparent and palpable self-consciousness. There is no room here for elaborated details, for ponderous arguments, or for intricate and

far-fetched comparisons. The only object at present before the speaker is, to lay down in the most simple and practical manner the subject or theme of the discourse; to shadow forth, without entering into or anticipating any material part of that discourse, the main features, and the broad general outline of the whole; that thus, whilst rendering his hearers attentive, docile, and well disposed towards him, he may gradually lead the way to the enunciation of the proposition, or back-bone of his sermon, that back-bone which is to impart strength, vigour, and consistency to all that is to follow.

At the very outside, the introduction will not occupy more than an eighth of the whole discourse; frequently it will not occupy so large a space. And if this be its due proportion to the rest of the sermon, and if the nature of the introduction be such as we have described it above, does it not follow pretty plainly that those extemporary preachers who write their exordiums in order to make a good start, are nearly certain to violate these essential conditions? As a matter of fact, are not such introductions nearly always as much too long as they are too elaborate and superior in style and composition to the remainder of the discourse? Do not such discourses, lacking as they do due order and strict subordination of the parts to each other and to

the whole, form those monsters of composition of which we spoke a little while ago? Are they not all head, and no body to speak of? Do we not find the exordium occupy the place of the peroration; and whilst we gaze with astonishment at the portentous proportions of the head, do we not look in vain for that body which it is supposed to vivify and grace, but which, on the contrary, it dwarfs, deforms, perhaps destroys? Most undoubtedly it is so in many cases; and hence, without presuming to lay down dogmatic and inflexible rules, which are to bind all men in all times and all circumstances, we can neither approve the practice of those extemporary preachers who write their introduction and other choice "bits" of their discourse, nor recommend it to the student for his adoption.

See with what beautiful simplicity, with what perfect order, with what clearness and precision, a great preacher like Dr. Newman introduces his subject! Let us examine the introduction of that eloquent writer's magnificent sermon on "The Neglect of Divine Calls and Warnings," and as we note the seemingly unstudied clearness and perspicuity with which he leads up to the enunciation of the parent idea of his discourse, viz., that those who think to live in sin and die in grace are guilty of a most terrible and fatal self-delusion, we perceive so little sign of art, of study, or of care-

ful preparation in its composition, that we immediately conclude we could do as well ourselves; and it is only after we have made the attempt that we discover how close a relation, and how intimate a connection, there exists between the most perfect simplicity of style and the most finished eloquence of composition.

In studying the introduction which we here propose to his consideration, let the reader mark, in the first place, how simply and with what order Dr. Newman disposes of the preliminary ideas and notions which so naturally present themselves:—

"No one sins," he begins, "without making some excuse to himself for sinning. He is obliged to do so: man is not like the brute beasts; he has a divine gift within him which we call reason, and which constrains him to give an account to it for what he does. He cannot act at random; however he acts, he must act by some kind of rule, on some sort of principle, else he is vexed and dissatisfied with himself. Not that he is very particular whether he finds a good reason or a bad, when he is very much straitened for a reason, but a reason of some sort he must have. Hence you sometimes find that those who give up religious duty, attack the conduct of religious men, whether their acquaintance, or the ministers or professors of religion, as a sort

of excuse—a very bad one—for their neglect. Others, and Catholics too, will make the excuse that they are so far from church, or so closely occupied at home, whether they will or not, that they cannot serve God as they ought. Others say that it is no use trying, that they have again and again gone to confession, and tried to keep out of mortal sin, and cannot; and so they give up the attempt as hopeless. Others, who are not Catholics, when they fall into sin, excuse themselves on the plea that they are but following nature; that the impulses of nature are so very strong, and that it cannot be wrong to follow that nature which God has given us. Others are bolder still, and cast off religion altogether; they deny its truth; they deny Church, Gospel, and Bible; they go so far perhaps as even to deny God's governance of His creatures. They boldly deny that there is any life after death: and, this being the case, of course they would be fools indeed not to take their pleasure here, and to make as much of this poor life as they can."

Having thus disposed of the various classes with whom he does not intend to deal on this occasion, let the reader mark, in the next place, the skill and clearness with which the great orator introduces the subject of his discourse:—

"And there are others," he continues, "and to these I am going to address myself, who try to speak peace to themselves by cherishing the thought, that something or other will happen after all to keep them from eternal ruin, though they now continue in their neglect of God; that it is a long time yet to death; that there are many chances in their favour; that they shall repent in process of time, when they get old, as a matter of course; that they mean to repent some day; that they mean, sooner or later, seriously to take their state into account, and to make their ground good; and, if they are Catholics, they add, that at least they will die with the last sacraments, and that therefore they need not trouble themselves about the matter."

Not less worthy of attention are the introductions to the same writer's sermons on Purity and Love, God's Will the End of Life, Nature and Grace, etc., etc.*

Having introduced and sufficiently explained the general bearings of his subject by means of his introduction, the preacher passes, by a natural transition, to the proposition or theme of his discourse. This proposition, as we well know, may be expressed in a manner more or less formal, as circumstances may require, or individual

* Discourses Addressed to Mixed Congregations.

tastes may suggest. One man will say, in the driest, plainest way: "Mortal sin is the greatest evil of the world, and therefore we are bound to avoid it by every means in our power;" whilst another will introduce precisely the same substantial truth in a more roundabout and less pedantic manner. But, whatever method the preacher may employ in its enunciation, and, if he be wise, he will avoid all excess of stiffness and pedantry, the proposition of the discourse, flowing as a natural consequence from what has preceded, will be expressed in a few, sharp, pointed, and well-chosen words, will be plain, clear, and precise, stating the subject, the whole subject, and nothing but the subject.

The preacher has now fairly entered, or, to speak more correctly, he must be supposed to have entered, upon his subject, and now his difficulties really begin.

We need scarcely say that it is one thing to be able to sketch the plan of one's discourse, and another, and a very different thing, to be able to realise that plan and reduce it to practice. And it is in this realization, and this power of reducing our plan to practice, that the great difficulty of good extempore preaching consists. Many a man ascends the pulpit with the subject about which he is to speak clearly present to his mind: the plan of his discourse has been carefully sketched, and is in his pocket, or, perhaps, on the ledge of the pulpit

before his eyes; and he cannot, do what he may, contrive to enter on this subject. It is plainly and clearly in sight, and, yet, he cannot manage to lay his hand upon it; he cannot grasp it in a few strong, vigorous words, and thus present it, living, breathing, and existent, to his audience. Hence, he continues, as people say, to beat about the bush, without ever setting his foot within it; he repeats the ideas of his introduction until his audience are tired of hearing them; and still, no matter how often he may repeat them, they never serve to lead him practically into the theme or body of his discourse. He contrives to obtain many glimpses of the promised land, but he never succeeds in entering it; or, if he does eventually enter, it is after so much weary journeying through the wilderness, that he is himself utterly unable to enjoy its beautiful fertility, or to render its treasures fruitful to the multitude whom he has undertaken to lead into the chosen spot. Horace tells us that the man who has made a good beginning has half done his work: *Qui bene cœpit facti* dimidium habet:* but the poet does not tell us so clearly *how* a man is to make this good beginning. As it is in this precisely that the difficulty consists, it will

* "Dimidium facti, qui cœpit, habet."—Lib. i. Ep. ii. Ad Sed. Lo].

be worth our while to consider this matter at some little length.

The difficulties which beset the young preacher at this point, and interfere, more or less completely, with the realization of his plan, may be broadly reduced to two :—

I. The difficulty of seizing his subject.

II. The difficulty of seizing his audience.

CHAPTER XIII.

HOW TO SEIZE THE SUBJECT—DIFFICULTY OF LAYING DOWN GENERAL RULES—THE ADVANTAGES OF A CLEAR DIVISION IN ENABLING A PREACHER TO SEIZE HIS SUBJECT—THE QUALITIES OF A GOOD DIVISION DEDUCED FROM A CONSIDERATION OF THE OFFICE AND DIGNITY OF THE PREACHER.

THE great difficulty in the preacher's way at this point of his discourse is to seize his subject, and we have already seen to some extent what is meant by this. The preacher, we will suppose, has delivered his introduction; he has announced the proposition or theme of his sermon; he has arrived at the body of his discourse, and he does not know how to enter upon it; he cannot seize his subject and reduce it to order, give life to its parts, and vigorous action to the whole. Here is the first great startling difficulty in his way, and the question to be considered is, how this difficulty may be met and conquered in the easiest, the most practical, and the most effective manner.

You will answer that his plan is before him, and that, as is obvious, he must seize his subject through the realization of his plan. This is quite true, but still the difficulty recurs, since his plan merely comprises leading ideas, and the question is, how these very ideas themselves are to be realized, how they are to be verified, how the principle of life is to be infused into them, how they are to be ushered into existence, clad in the garb of strong, vigorous, spoken words.

It is impossible to lay down any general rule which may apply to every case alike. Perhaps it is impossible to lay down any very strict rule on this matter at all. Much must be left to individual capacity and fertility of resource, to circumstances of time, place, and person. But we may safely lay down as a most practical and sound precept on this subject, that the extemporary preacher must carefully foresee and provide for this state of affairs, for what we may call this crisis in his discourse. He must foresee that moment in his discourse, when, having disposed of his introduction, and having laid the theme or proposition of his sermon clearly before his audience, he must pass on at once to its consideration, and to the development of those arguments, illustrations, etc., by which it is to be still further explained, maintained, and enforced. Before entering the pulpit, he must—at all events until he

acquire great readiness, confidence, and facility—foresee, not only the manner in which he is thus to seize his subject, but, to some extent, the very words by which he will do so. If he can only gain this point, if he can only make sure of this, he will in all probability have secured everything. The great difficulty in the matter is to make the first plunge. Timid, irresolute, nervous, or ill-prepared men, cannot bring themselves to make this plunge. They stand shivering on the brink of the uncertain sea before them; they are ignorant of its currents; they fear its depth; they are wofully conscious of rocks or breakers ahead, and equally and painfully conscious of their own unpreparedness to face these hidden dangers. The man who desires to succeed must provide against these contingencies. He must sound the depths before him; he must provide himself, as far as prudence and skill may enable him to do so, with the necessary protection and preservatives; and, having done this, he must, when the moment arrives, take the plunge like a man. If his nerves were keenly braced, if he knew what he was about, if his faculties were all properly under his control, he will rise to the surface after his plunge, calm, cool, self-collected, and, what is the great point, *master of his subject.* There will be no more hesitation; no more shivering on the brink; no more futile efforts to

grasp that subject which is ever eluding his touch, which is ever glancing, indeed, before his mind's eye, but doing so with such fitful and uncertain gleams of light, as only serve to lead him more and more hopelessly astray.

This happy result, this faculty of making a start, and of effecting a real entrance into our subject, will be the fruit, as is evident, much more of self-confidence, of practical, ready knowledge of what we are about, and, perhaps, most of all, of a little familiarity with the pulpit, than of any dogmatic rules, or of any system of teaching. But there is one thing which will assist us more than any other in the whole matter, one at which we have already glanced, and it is this: a *clear, natural, and simple division of the discourse which we aspire to deliver.*

Clear, plain, practical, elastic division of the subject is, as we have frequently said, the backbone of all really good preaching; it is the very essence and substance of success in extemporary preaching. And although we have dealt with this matter, at least in a limited and subordinate degree, when treating of the Plan of a Discourse and its essential qualities, it is of such great and practical importance to the sacred orator, and more especially to the extemporary preacher, that we are certain we shall be pardoned for again returning to a brief consideration of it in this place. Besides, the broad idea of the

arrangement of our matter, by means of the General Plan of the discourse, is not precisely the same thing as its Division.

There is nothing, then, like a clear, plain, practical, elastic division of one's matter for enabling a preacher to seize his subject; and there is nothing like a good plan for enabling a man thus to divide his matter.

If unity be the great leading quality of every good plan, it naturally follows that every good discourse will be reducible to a syllogism—we do not say that it will be expressed in this manner—and it is just in proportion as he keeps this simple truth clearly before his mind, that the preacher will be an adept in seizing his subject. Let him remember this: that his discourse is one; that it contains a syllogism, of which he is to explain the major, prove the minor, and dilate upon the consequence: let him keep his eye keenly fixed upon this truth; let him never lose sight of this dominating idea; and, then, having secured this, let him follow the bent of his genius, the promptings of his intellect or his heart, and his success will be secured—he will speak fluently, eloquently, and well. If the mind of such a man begin to wander in the pulpit, if distractions arise, or troublesome thoughts obtrude themselves upon him, if he begin to lose his hold upon his subject, if the keen vision of his mind's eye begin to grow dim, he has his

resource and remedy ready to his hand. He has but to throw his eye, with one strong, quick, steady glance backwards upon his subject. He has but to ask himself, "Where am I now? What am I proving or explaining just at present? Am I dealing with Scriptural arguments, with those taken from authority, or those relying upon human reason or experience for their weight?" And his mind will at once recover its balance, his intellect will reassert its undiminished and unquestioned sway, and, once again, he will stand before his subject, its master and its lord.

Nor, does it follow that because a man has made a skilful division of the matter of his discourse, and carries it clearly in his mind's eye, he is therefore to lay it before his audience in the same shape, and, if you will, in the same hard dry way in which he has conceived it. "*Il faut,*" says Fenelon, "*un ordre, mais un ordre qui ne soit point promis et découvert dès le commencement.*" This order, this division of his matter, let him remember, is intended much more for his own guidance, much more to keep him in the straight path, than for the benefit, at least immediately, of his hearers. According to Fenelon,* the most practically useful division is that which, avoiding

* "Dial. sur l'Eloq.," tom. 10.

all formal partition and pedantic enunciation of the matter of the discourse, nevertheless carefully distinguishes all those points which require to be distinguished, which assigns to each point its own proper place, and that place the precise one in which it will make the greatest impression. Such an order and arrangement as this the preacher, at least, must carry clearly and distinctly in his own mental vision, but he must, of course, also use his discretion as to how far he will allow such design and arrangement to become manifest to his hearers. We do not speak here of the relative advantage or disadvantage of formal division in regard to the hearer; we only speak of it in its relation to the preacher, and the help which it is calculated to afford him in his efforts to seize and maintain his hold upon his subject. For this latter purpose it is most useful to all, whilst it is absolutely indispensable to many, extemporary preachers. Without such careful and practical division of their matter, most men wander hopelessly from the point, and become lost in the labyrinths of their own confusion and disorder.

"Concionem," says Natalis Alexander, "ita partiatur, ut auditores omnia facile percipiant, et memoria teneant, quo majorem inde fructum referre possint. Quamvis evangelium integrum in modum homiliæ tractet, quod maxime optandum est, et in quo maxime eniten-

dum est, omnia tamen quæ dicturus est, revocet ad duo vel tria capita seu propositiones, non disparatas, sed connexas, et ex eodem principio seu argumento generali ductas, cujus unitas partes omnes complectatur. Subdivisiones raræ sint, et si quando fiant, intelligantur potius ab auditore, quam a concionatore exprimantur, et affectentur." This advice is of the greatest practical utility, and it admits of general application. No doubt there are discourses, destined for unlettered or unsophisticated audiences, so simple in their nature and their scope, as to afford little room for anything like formal division of matter, less room still for any pedantic parade of such division before our hearers; and there are other discourses which partake so fully of the nature of the set sermon, the *plena ac numerosa oratio*, as funeral orations, etc., that anything in the shape of formal or constrained division would evidently and palpably interfere with that flow of smooth, graceful, and polished eloquence which is essential to their success. But, making all due allowance for these and a few other obvious exceptions, it is quite certain that the advantage and utility of a clear, orderly, and practical division of the matter, in all ordinary sermons, is incontestable.

The extemporary preacher who endeavours to speak without a previous careful arrangement and division of his matter, is almost certain to fail, and this for the simple

reason that it is almost impossible for ordinary men to "possess" and master their subject in such circumstances. Fenelon remarks that it is very rare to find order and arrangement in the operations of the mind. But, he adds, the preacher who, possessing this rare gift of order, also possesses energy, power, and good sense, will be perfect.

Whilst, therefore, he will carefully avoid the extreme of formality, or constrained or inelastic divisions; whilst he will use great discretion as to the manner and the fulness with which he will lay his division, or, in other words, the secret and naked skeleton of his discourse, before the eyes of his audience; the extemporary preacher who desires not merely to succeed, but to save himself from failure, will, if he be wise, be equally solicitous and careful ever to be guided, governed, and controlled by order and method, by a method which will arrange and put everything in its own proper place, and that place the one which reason, good sense, and clear knowledge and foresight of the exigencies of oratory, will suggest that it should occupy.

Let us repeat once more, the great secret in this matter is, *never lose sight of your subject.* This is the one great dominating rule and principle which should possess the extemporary preacher, by the aid of which all his views on the formation and acquisition of ideas,

on the choice and arrangement of arguments, on earnest appeals to the heart and the sympathies of his hearers, must be controlled, directed, and governed. So long as he keeps this great principle clearly and strongly in view, he may give the fullest scope to the impulses of his genius, and to the promptings of his heart, without any fear that they will lead him astray. On the contrary, they will only contribute to his success, and to the substantial reality of the triumph which will reward and crown his efforts.

We have already remarked that every really orderly sermon will be, not expressed in, but reducible to, a syllogism. Let us once more impress this truth upon the mind of the young preacher. Besplas explains this clearly and well. Every sermon, says he, is a syllogism, of which the Major is contained in the Introduction, the Minor in the Proposition, the Arguments or Proofs in the Body of the Discourse, and the Consequence in the Peroration. Thus, an infallible means of judging whether a discourse is in order, is to reduce it to a syllogism. If it be not susceptible of this ordeal there is something wrong about it. According to this principle, he continues, the Leading Proposition, or Major, will be contained in the Introduction or Exordium; and, although it may easily admit, or, perhaps, will demand, some *explanation*, it should not require or

call for strict and logical proof. Should it do so, you would have begun to build your house without a foundation; or, at all events, upon such a weak and uncertain foundation as must prove infinitely embarrassing to your future efforts. Your major proposition, therefore, will be one which, though it may admit of explanation, can neither admit of, nor call for proof. The point or points to be proved will be contained in the Minor Proposition; and to their elucidation and sustainment the Body of the Discourse will be devoted. This is a great principle—this is the secret of order; and yet, how many preachers are either ignorant of this principle, or lose sight of it in the composition of their sermons? How much weariness and waste of time, and what great loss of golden opportunities for glorifying God and serving souls, is the inevitable consequence of this ignorance or omission!

Let us, in the light of this principle, see how Massillon proceeds.

He has to speak, let us say, of "*The Happiness of the Just*," and how does he establish his proposition?

He commences by laying down the broad, general principle, that, "*Those alone are truly happy who find comfort and support in the afflictions of life.*" The development of this beautiful and leading idea serves as the matter of the exordium.

But, he continues, "*The just alone receive true and solid comfort and support in their sufferings;*" and this forms the minor proposition, containing, as is plain, an assertion requiring to be proved, and supplying in these proofs the foundation of all those arguments, illustrations, etc., which are to constitute the body of the discourse.

Therefore, he concludes, recapitulating and enforcing the great ideas of the whole discourse, "*The just alone are truly happy, since they alone are truly comforted and sustained in the afflictions of life.*"

The advantage of such a division as this, with all its minor ramifications duly and clearly set forth, is palpable; and the man who is master of such a valuable auxiliary can scarcely fail to seize his subject, and to retain his hold upon it.

But, it may be asked, what is the best and most practical way of dividing one's matter? We answer, that which each one finds easiest and most useful to himself. In "Sacred Eloquence"* we have treated at length of the selection and arrangement of arguments, and have explained the various methods of arranging the matter of a discourse which are laid down by the most eminent authorities. The young and in-

* Chap. viii., sections 4 and 5, 3rd edition.

experienced preacher will, no doubt, do well carefully to study these various methods; and he will probably adopt that which recommends him to arrange the materials of the whole discourse, as well as of each individual part or prominent portion of it, under two or three great leading heads, as, Scripture, Tradition, and Reason. But, after all, each man, certainly each skilful and practised orator, will have some plan or method of arranging his materials peculiar to himself—some plan which he has acquired from the best of all masters, experience—some plan which he never saw, at least, not just as he employs it, in any book, but which he has invented or drawn up for himself, and which possesses this one great incalculable advantage, that it is his own, and that it enables him to dispose his forces with the greatest possible ease, readiness, and facility to himself, and with the greatest utility and effect in regard to the object in view.

Let each one aim at securing some method or plan of his own for arranging the materials of his discourse, and let him stick to that. It may be clumsy, inartistic, too brief or too diffuse to bear critical examination, but let him not be uneasy about this. If it suit him, and answer his purpose, practically and well, this is the great point, and it will be of more value to him than the most elaborate method which could be

devised by the skilful rhetorician. If it render him master of his subject, if it enable him to seize that subject in the fulness of its fruitful unity, if it present him with each argument, illustration, etc., of his discourse, ready to his hand at the very moment when he needs it, and if, whilst it does all this, it still leaves him sufficiently free to follow those inspirations of the moment which are so precious to the preacher, *it is a perfect method for him*, and in it he has secured an auxiliary which he can never too highly value, and which he can never too frequently employ.

Let him not be too solicitous about the precise nature or method of his division. Let him only remember that, whilst it admits of the greatest liberty, and gives the widest scope to individual capacity or taste, there are some points on which it is inexorable —on which it allows no latitude.

It *may* be long or it may be short, but it *must* be clear, just, natural, and practical. These qualities are simply essential to it; without their presence it cannot possibly attain its object—without them, in one word, it does not exist.

It must be clear; its object must be to throw light upon that which is dark and obscure, or it is nothing. It is our mission—one which we can never sufficiently appreciate—one for whose perfect fulfilment we can

never labour half enough—to enlighten the world. We are the children of the light—*Filii lucis;* we are the light of the world—*Lux mundi.* It is one of the most glorious prerogatives of our high vocation, that, whilst the children of the world are condemned to walk in darkness—*in tenebris ambulant*—we are placed on high to shed the saving light of life and truth upon the benighted world. This is why we are called the ministers of the light, the light of the world. But how are we to enlighten the world? Is it not by our teaching? Is it not by means of the ministry of the word? Is it not by laying before our people, in season and out of season, plainly, simply, and earnestly, all those truths which they are bound to know, and all those virtues which they are bound to practise. *Docendo, quæ scire omnibus necessarium est ad salutem.* Is it not, before all things else, by doing this *clearly*? We have in another place* explained at great length what is understood by the clearness of a Christian discourse, and the wide extension and signification of that term. Here, it will suffice to remind the reader of the great principle laid down by St. Prosper:† *Tam simplex et apertus sermo debet esse, ut ab intelligentia sui nullos, quamvis imperitos, excludat;* and to remind him too, that this

* "Sacred Eloquence," chap. viii., section 2.

† Lib. i. De Vit. Contempl., c. 23.

end is only gained by instruction which is perfectly simple and clear. But, as it is evident, that any ordinary instruction will possess the quality of clearness, just in proportion as the method according to which the matter of it is divided and partitioned out is clear and precise, it necessarily follows that anything like obscurity or confusion must be fatal to the object of division. It follows too, that every division which is clear will arrange and partition out the matter of the discourse with such order, nicety, and precision as to enable the preacher not only to carry the whole sermon in his mind without danger of confusion, but to lay his hand upon each particular part at the very moment when he requires to employ it.

Is it not certain, too, that the division of a subject will be clear in proportion as it is natural? If a man were to lay down certain strict undeviating laws for himself, and to say that, no matter what the subject of his discourse, or the circumstances of time, place, and audience might be, he would always arrange and divide his matter according to one unvarying rule, the result would surely be insufferable stiffness, and, in all human probability, obscurity and confusion. But, the prudent and skilled orator proceeds very differently to this. He knows well that every subject naturally resolves itself into some great leading points, or heads, or, whatever

you may please to call them, and having selected his subject, and collected the materials of his discourse, his great anxiety is to discover, not according to what fanciful and far-fetched method he may arrange them, but to discover and adopt those plain, simple, obvious divisions, or points, into which his subject most naturally resolves itself, since he understands perfectly well that these, forming the natural divisions of his subject, will be at once the most just, and throw the greatest clearness and light upon his discourse in its varied bearings. In such a division everything will be in its proper place, the subject will be embraced in its entirety, neither more nor less. Each point or leading argument will be a stepping stone to the next, and will gather additional force and strength from its relation to what has gone before, and that which is to follow it. Nothing will stand alone. Each part will preserve its own individuality intact; it will not trench upon any other portion of the discourse; but, at the same time, the various parts will possess such a strict relation to one anothor and to the whole, as to produce that perfect unity of which we have spoken in another place, that unity which is, in one sense, at once the cause and effect of harmony and proportion.

Matter arranged in this manner *must* possess the priceless quality of order and clearness; and such an

order or clearness of division is of incalculable assistance to the preacher, in aiding him to seize his subject and retain his hold of the same. It assists his memory in a wonderful manner, helps him to acquire the valuable habit of self-concentration, keeps his mind from wandering, or enables him to repress and recall it in the most effectual manner. The advantage which he will derive from the presence of such a clear, natural, and well arranged division of his matter, will far outweigh any momentary stiffness and formality which may threaten to interfere with the force and effect of those appeals to the sympathies and better feelings of an audience, upon which, it is quite true, the orator must ultimately rely so much for the success of his efforts. But, so far from an orderly division of matter, in the purely instructive or argumentative part of a discourse, diminishing the effect of those appeals to the passions which have to be made in their own proper place, they actually prepare the way, and that in the most practical manner, for these appeals. A Christian preacher can never descend to become a buffoon any more than he can descend to become a mere mob orator. If he aspire to move men's hearts to their lowest depths, and most surely there are many occasions during the course of his sacred ministry when he must aim at this—if he seek, by influencing the warmest passions and the keen-

est sympathies of his hearers, to win them to his purpose and bend them to his will—he must seek to do so, he must seek to gain this result, as the effect of solid argument, of calm, reflecting reason. If he were a mere mob orator, he might, perhaps, afford to disregard the means provided he attained his end; it might be enough for him to gain his purpose by blinding his hearers, by appealing to unworthy passions, by leading them astray. But, being as he is, the minister of the Gospel, and the ambassador of Him who is "The Way, the Truth, and the Light," he is not at liberty to adopt such means as these. He must gain his victories, he must lead men into the Way, by means of the Truth and the Light. Let him seek to move, since most men are gained to God only when they are efficaciously moved, but let him not seek to move until he has first thoroughly enlightened. Let him first cause the rays of God's beautiful Truth to shine upon the dark places, and, when he has done this, he will have prepared a field, destined to be rich and fruitful, for the action of God's all-powerful Grace. He may succeed in exciting a momentary enthusiasm—an enthusiasm unworthy of himself, mischievous and useless to his hearers—by mere empty appeals to the passions, by appeals which are not founded upon solid argument, upon sound instruction, or upon plain common sense. But, of this

let him be quite certain, that the only efforts which will be worthy of him as a Christian minister, will be those which are built upon the solid foundation of simplicity and Christian truth; that he will never advance with safety, or with a rational assurance of solid fruit and of enduring success, except when his advances are directed, governed, and controlled by that order which is built upon Christian truth, Christian reason, and Christian good taste.

The division of a discourse must possess another quality, and one more essential than any which we have yet considered. It must be thoroughly *practical*. And this will be evident from even the most cursory glance at the nature of the office which we undertake to discharge. Let us remember with St. Augustine that we are something more than mere Rhetoricians—"*Non sumus Rhetores, sed Piscatores.*" We are fishers of souls. Let us reflect on the significance of the title with which the Spirit of God has dignified our office. It is the ministry of the Word: *ministerium Verbi*. The minister of the Word does not speak, as a great authority has eloquently said,* in order to tickle the ears of his audience, or in order to frame uncommon phrases. He simply speaks in order to fulfil his

* "Entretiens sur la Prédication Populaire." Dupanloup.

ministry—a ministry the most grave and the most important; a ministry of action and of life; a ministry which is to tell upon souls, but which requires the co-operation of those souls; which is to produce its effect, at least to some extent, by the aid of human means, by conviction and persuasion. Such a ministry must be a living ministry—it must be pregnant with life and light. Its object is to vivify—*Eloquium tuum vivificat me*—to animate souls with the principle of life, to impart to those souls, and to nourish within them, the life of faith, and of grace; to cause them to live the life of virtue, and of morality, or to strengthen and confirm these essential qualities of Christian being, if they have already been born within the soul. This amelioration, this elevation, this vivification of souls, as the same distinguished writer remarks, is not one of those exterior works which are accomplished by human means. On the contrary, this is one of those works which, being essentially in the moral order, have their basis of operation, and produce their effects, in the hidden depths of the soul. It is a work of intelligence and of light, of persuasion, and of love; and, hence, discarding merely natural means, it relies for its results upon the living and the searching word of God: *Sermo Dei vivus et efficax.*

From all this it follows, that as the Pastor, in order to

fulfil the obligations of his high ministry, must be a man of action, a man of thought, a man of prayer—in brief, a man powerful in word and work: *Potens verbo et opere:* so, the word which he preaches must be eminently practical, not beating the air with empty and uncertain sounds, but, on the contrary, clear, precise, and tending directly to the desired end.

The true Pastor, the true fisher of souls, speaks immediately, directly, and essentially to his hearers. The whole end, object, and scope of his preaching, is to make his hearers better men, to induce them to practise virtue, to avoid vice, and, by doing this, to save their souls. But, salvation is not attained by mere belief, by empty, barren faith. It is the fruit of good works, of faith working through charity, of Christian belief manifesting itself in Christian practice. Hence, every sermon worthy of the name, naturally and necessarily aims at some practical result to be produced upon the souls of the hearers; and, hence, the division of every really practical discourse, will embrace something to be done, or something to be avoided. A sermon without some tangible, practical result, is a sermon without fruit, and a sermon will almost infallibly be cursed with this barrenness and sterility, unless its division contain some plain practical points, clearly marked out and defined, to be laid before the people;

some points which are of such a nature as to have a direct and necessary influence upon the amendment of men's lives, the correction of their vices, or their progress in solid Christian virtue. As in the formation of the general plan of his discourse, so, still more in the particular division of his matter, let the preacher ask himself, again and again, that question, full of such important influences on the success of his efforts: What is it, precisely, that I am about to propose to my hearers? What am I about to ask of them? By what means do I intend to gain my end, and win my audience to my will?

Such are some of the great leading ideas which, it appears to us, the preacher should keep most carefully before his mind when dividing the matter of his discourse, and by the aid of which he will most effectually *seize his subject*. Let him not aim at doing too much. Let him avoid being too formal and precise; let him content himself with those two or three strong and vigorous members into which every strong and vigorous subject most naturally resolves itself. These members may, perchance, seem somewhat rugged and unpolished in their homely strength; but, *if* they be really strong, that will be enough. The mantle of their strength will amply cover and condone what may be wanting to their perfect comeliness of form and shape. Above all,

let him avoid useless subdivisions, and tedious hair-splittings of his subject. However useful it may be in a purely controversial or philosophical treatise, or, however much it may have been employed in other times, the spirit of our age, and the best practice of our pulpit, is altogether against the use of profuse subdivision of a subject in sacred oratory. As an ordinary rule, instead of throwing light upon a subject, the only conceivable purpose for which they can be employed, subdivisions surround and envelop it with darkness and obscurity, whilst they weaken and depress instead of elevating and dignifying it. As Quintilian says, useless or profuse subdivisions of a subject are the most certain way of producing that obscurity which it is precisely the object of order and arrangement to prevent. They do more than this: depriving a discourse of that broadness of view, and that massive dignity of proportion, which are at once the source and the result, as they are the surest marks, of true strength, superfluous subdivisions fritter a discourse away to nothing, thus rendering it inefficacious to its end, which is the enlightenment of the ignorant and the amendment of the erring; and unworthy of him who is the minister of the Light no less than of the Truth—of him whose ministry must be fruitless and dead unless it is potent to lead his flock, safely, surely, and easily, into the

blessed Way of Life, through the blessed and saving influences of the Light and the Truth.

In fine, let us remark that this question of division, or practical arrangement of matter, has reference to each point, to each leading or subordinate argument, of which the whole discourse may be made up. It is in this precisely that the difference between the plan of a discourse and its division consists. The plan has reference to the whole discourse in a broad general way. The division applies to the whole discourse in general, but it also applies, in a precise and particular manner, to each portion of it, that is, to each leading portion or member. One of the great objects of the division, the one which we have just considered at such length, is to assist the preacher to secure in the easiest and most telling way the perfect realization of his plan in its entirety, and of each portion of his discourse in its individuality. We mention this matter here, since it is well that the reader should keep this distinction clearly before his mind, otherwise he may confuse ideas and principles which would be better kept separate.

CHAPTER XIV.

HOW TO SEIZE THE AUDIENCE—THE POWER OF SEIZING OUR AUDIENCE IS ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY TO PERFECT SUCCESS—IN WHAT THIS POWER CONSISTS—THE CHRISTIAN ORATOR MUST KNOW HOW TO TEACH AND TO MOVE, HOW TO APPEAL TO THE INTELLECT AND THE HEART—INSTRUCTION AND ARGUMENTATION, THEIR FORCE, NATURE, AND ESSENTIAL QUALITIES.

IT has been well remarked that it not infrequently happens that a preacher speaks *at* his hearers without ever actually speaking *to* them.

This may arise from various causes. A man loses sight of his special audience, with its special needs and its special circumstances; he has no one, in particular, in view in what he says, any more than he has any plain, precise, and definite object clearly before him; he speaks of vague generalities, in a vague general way, which would apply to any audience equally as well as to the one he addresses. Instead of speaking and

addressing himself to the audience before him—instead of applying himself to the consideration of its moral being, probing its wounds, and applying the special remedies which those wounds may require, he addresses himself to some shadowy phantom which has been called into life by himself, and which has no real existence outside his own brain. In a word, his sermon has no closer practical application to any particular audience, than the discourses which are delivered, principally as a literary exercise, by a student in college. Perhaps it is even more deficient in practical application. The result is, that his sermon, being devoid of the principle of energy and life, wanting special direction equally with practical application, falls cold and dead upon the ears and the hearts of an unmoved and unsympathising audience; the result is, that whilst a man may succeed, perhaps perfectly, in seizing his subject, he may fail, utterly and completely, in seizing his audience.

In the course of this essay we have broached so many of the difficulties which assail the preacher, that we almost shrink from approaching the consideration of another. It may seem to some that our object is to raise up giants for the pleasure of demolishing them. But it is not so. The road we have to travel is beset with difficulties; and, although we venture to hope

that we have by this time succeeded in clearing a good many of them out of the young preacher's way, there still remains one, so practical and so formidable, that we can neither afford to despise nor to pass it by, without careful study and attention. We shall notice it, however, as briefly as possible.

There is perhaps no preacher, certainly no one with much practice in preaching, who has not had some experience of days on which everything seems to go wrong with him. No matter how carefully he may have selected the subject of his discourse; no matter how diligently he may have studied it; no matter how earnestly and zealously he may have striven to imbue himself with the spirit and the sentiments appropriate to the occasion; it has all been of little or no use. His words have fallen idly and coldly upon the ears of an audience whom all his efforts have failed to rouse, or to excite into anything like warmth or enthusiasm; an audience whose mere attention perhaps he has not succeeded in arresting and maintaining. On days such as these, and they occur in the life of every preacher, he seems to be pressed to the earth by a relentless and overpowering hand; and, after struggling for a longer or shorter time with the adverse circumstances which surround and master him, he is fain to descend from the pulpit, oppressed by the conviction, as evident as it

is painful, that he has produced no result; that his efforts, so far at least as they may be weighed in human balances, have been thrown away; that he has moved no man's heart, perhaps not even convinced any man's intellect; that, in one word, he has never for a moment mastered the position, but that the whole thing, to use a plain, hard phrase, has been a failure.

But there have been days—the "red-letter" days of the true orator—when it has been quite different with him. There have been days when the sacred fire has blazed up keenly and brightly within his soul; when his voice, and his eye, and his heart, have answered promptly and readily, with keen instinct, and with eager impulse, to the demand of those who, sitting at his feet, have hung upon his words; of those who, with their eyes riveted upon his face, have communed with him, soul to soul, in that unspoken but most eloquent language, whose mystic power may be felt at such a time with a responsive throb, but can never be described. On such days as these, the flash of his eye has been enough to inflame the hearts of his audience; the mere upraising of his hand has been enough to hold them spell-bound. On these days he has stood before his audience, in the fullest, deepest sense of the word, their master and their ruler. They have hung entranced upon the words of his mouth. They have

been powerless before the force of his reasoning, the fascination of his manner, the magic of his voice, the depth and the vehemence of his passion. They have been moved in the deepest recesses of their moral being, and in the most hidden corners of their hearts. The preacher has realized to the full his position as Pastor and as Man, and hence he has spoken to them in the very language of nature, of nature ennobled and exalted by religion and faith. His success on such occasions has been perfect and complete, simply because it has had its foundation in that mutual sympathy, that mutual action of soul upon soul, which is perhaps so rarely found, at least in the perfection of its fulness, but which, when it once exists between a preacher and his audience, renders success easy, triumphant, and complete. In one word, on such days as these he has mastered the position fully and entirely; he has not only done what it is in the power of every man of ordinary attainments and industry to do—seize his subject—but he has succeeded in achieving a much more important victory, and one which is much more rarely gained—he has seized his audience.

It is much easier to dilate on the importance to the preacher of being able to seize his audience, than to show precisely in what this power consists, or how it is to be exercised. But, as it is in this that the secret of

success consists much more than in anything else, we must necessarily devote some little attention to the matter, more especially as the tendency of our studies up to this point has undoubtedly been in the direction of stiffness and formality, and we must candidly admit that if the young preacher were to content himself with mastering and applying the principles which we have hitherto striven to establish, the result would probably be to make him, perhaps a very precise and methodical preacher, but certainly not a very graceful or pleasing one.

It is one thing, then, to seize our subject, and another, and a very different thing, to seize our audience. And a man may seize and master his subject thoroughly, and yet lose the greater part, if not the whole, of his labours, through his inability to seize his audience.

But, it may be asked, what is meant by seizing our audience, and how is it to be accomplished?

The power of seizing our audience is simply the power of speaking to their hearts and of arresting their attention—the power of causing ourselves to be attended to. There are some men who have but to open their lips and the whole congregation hangs entranced upon their utterances. It may be the charm and fascination of manner, or it may be the eloquence and passionate warmth of the language, or it may be, what perhaps

strongest and most powerful of all, the secret but invincible influence which lurks in the tones of the sympathetic voice; but, whatever it may be, it is a something which rivets the attention, which absorbs the faculties, which hushes every tongue and stills every restless movement, which attracts every eye to the face of him who speaks, which causes every heart to beat in unison with that of the speaker, which, in one word, causes him to be attended to with pleasure and parted from with regret. The man who is master of this power is master of a great gift; no man can be an orator without it; and it is something very different from the mere power of seizing the subject. The latter is, or at least may be, to a great extent mechanical, and the result of mere patient industry and practice; the former will always have something of genius and passion in its composition, will always be inspired, at least in some measure and degree, by the sacred fire which is as much the inheritance of the true orator as of the poet.

And now, it may be fairly asked how is this end, so desirable and so valuable, to be attained, and what practical means are to be employed in its acquisition.

It is evident that the power of seizing our audience is nothing more than the power of unfolding our subject in a clear, forcible, attractive, and winning manner. Up to a certain point in their sermon, any two men

who have carefully prepared the plan of their discourse, are on an equal footing. Both are in possession of a plan, and both, let us suppose, have been equally successful in seizing the subject. But it is not enough to seize the subject; they must also be able to unfold it, and bring it home to the minds and hearts of their hearers, and here they part company. One of these men cannot, do as he will, realize his plan, make it practical to his hearers, render it attractive to them, and pregnant with influence on the amendment of their lives and manners. The other succeeds perfectly in this: he causes himself to be attended to, his teaching is received with reverent and ready respect, whilst his admonitions, his exhortations, and reproofs, produce their full effect, and bring forth abundant fruit unto everlasting life. One man can unfold his subject, and the other is unable to do so.

To be able, then, to unfold our subject, to develop and realize our plan, so as to bring it home to every mind and to every heart, is plainly a matter of the utmost importance, and one upon which perfect success in preaching must ultimately depend.

We say *perfect* success, for a man may propose to himself an end in preaching which is really no end at all, just as he may produce a discourse which is not really a sermon. Many of the so-called sermons of the

day are nothing more than the baldest and most meagre of theological instructions. Others are merely polished and scholarly essays on some religious subject, handled in a perfectly cool and gentlemanly way, but without any other definite object than the production of the essay itself, or the decent filling up of a certain portion of the services of the Church. Such discourses rarely aim at anything higher than the scholarly quotation and treatment of a certain text, which, as Jeremy Taylor observes, is a very inconclusive, and a very dry way of dealing with a subject. And such a way of treating a subject can never result in the production of a sermon.

For what is a sermon? A sermon is, of its nature, a persuasive oration, and its ultimate object is, not to discuss some abstract point, or some metaphysical truth, not to convince our hearers that they are bound to become better men, but to persuade them, really and efficaciously, to do so.* And, if such be the nature and the object of a sermon, does it not follow that perfect success in preaching can only be gained when the subject of the discourse has been so unfolded and developed as to be brought home to every intellect and to every heart? Does it not follow that we shall only succeed in seizing our audience just in proportion as we are enabled to enlighten the intellect and to move

* "Sacred Eloquence," chap. ix. sec. i. et seq.

the heart? Does it not follow that perfect success in the development of our plan simply means perfect success in *teaching* and in *moving* our hearers?

To be able, then, to seize our audience, we must, let us repeat once more, be able to instruct them, and to move them; to influence the intellect and the heart. And our success in thus seizing them will be measured by the degree in which we possess, more or less perfectly, these precious faculties.

The body, or substantial part of every discourse, will be taken up with the work of instruction, in the broad and general meaning of the word as applied to sacred oratory, that is, with instruction embracing a clear explanation of the Christian doctrine, and the sustainment of the same by sound and solid reasoning.

Hence, the first step towards success in seizing our audience depends upon our power of explaining the doctrine which we preach.

It is not necessary to dwell in this place upon the necessity which lies in these days on every true pastor of souls, of explaining the doctrine of Christ, and of instructing his people solidly, clearly, and well in all those truths which they are bound to know, and all those virtues which they are bound to practise?* That we live in days in which ignorant self-sufficiency and

* "Sacred Eloquence."

flagrant dereliction of duty go hand in hand, is a truth which, unfortunately, requires no confirmation. It will be more to the point to inquire how we may best discharge a duty at once so important in itself and so intimately connected with our success.

The talent of instructing the people, and of explaining the Christian doctrine, can hardly be over-rated; and it is one which is more rarely possessed than may at first sight appear. The only thoroughly good teacher or instructor is the man who is able to adapt his teaching closely, pertinently, and effectively, to the intelligence, capacity, and special necessities of the persons whom he addresses, *hic et nunc*, as it is said. But, here precisely is the difficulty. It is easy enough to compose an instruction in the abstract, and this is just what most men do. They deliver vague, general, and unpractical discourses—discourses which have no special application to any really special audience, but which are just as well adapted to one congregation as to another. But what is needed is, not instruction in the abstract, but instruction in the concrete; in other words, instruction, every word of which shall have special and positive reference and application to the very people to whom it is addressed. And this is the real difficulty. It is so hard to get a man to understand this matter; harder still to get him intimately to appreciate it. It

is so hard to get many men to understand that true eloquence does not consist in mere grace of style, or in elegant figures of speech; but that it is simply the power of acting upon and influencing the minds and the hearts of men, and that, as a necessary consequence, the first condition of being eloquent consists in putting ourselves, in some sense, on a level with those to whom we speak, that thus we may address ourselves most clearly to their intellectual capacity, and most powerfully to their emotions and feelings. No language is eloquent, in the concrete, which does not accomplish this end; but it is not easy to get a young preacher to admit this principle, or reduce it to practice. A young preacher shrinks from employing that simple language, and that still more simple style, which alone are intelligible to the uneducated audience whom it may be his duty to instruct; and thus, forgetting that language has been primarily given to man as the vehicle of communicating his ideas to his fellow-men, whilst he labours to be elegant he simply becomes unintelligible and obscure. Or, as likely as not, he fails to comprehend and to master the intellectual difficulties of his simple flock. Everything is clear and plain to him, and he at once concludes that it is the same with those who listen to him. He does not appreciate the fact that it requires most careful study, and no ordinary

amount of patience, of tact, and of reflection, to address an uncultivated and uneducated audience with profit and success. Many men fail to understand and appreciate these ideas, and hence the talent of "teaching" is so rarely met with. But, if we desire to seize our audience, we must persuade ourselves that the power of teaching and instructing them is one of our most effective means of doing so; and we must equally persuade ourselves that we shall never become good teachers except by the careful observance of certain conditions which are radically opposed to the defects at which we have just glanced.

The man who would render his instruction at once useful and attractive, must be content to walk in the footsteps of his divine Lord and Master. When Jesus Christ addressed the crowds who flocked around His sacred feet, it was not in high-flown language, or in far-fetched figures of speech: on the contrary, He spoke in the most simple and familiar manner. The words which He employed are clear and plain, whilst His discourses contain many short maxims easy to retain and full of substance. When it is necessary to descend to the level of His hearers, He does not hesitate to do so. He condescends to employ the most homely comparisons, and the most striking, because the most familiar, illustrations. The disciple must not seek to be above

his master, but must be content to walk, at an humble distance, in His sacred footsteps. Nor let the young preacher fear, lest in striving to be simple, he incur the risk of degrading the dignity of the pulpit. If he study the sermons of Dr. Newman and other great masters of the language, he will find, for his comfort and consolation, that the utmost simplicity of expression is compatible with the greatest dignity and purity of style.

Let him only be simple; let him guard against the fatal error of supposing that, because he may have to speak on a familiar subject, or to an unlettered audience, he can therefore dispense with studious and diligent preparation; let him be careful to select such plain and practical subjects as are within the capacity of his hearers; let him employ no comparison or example, no illustration, sacred or profane, which is not easily intelligible to any ordinary intellect; let his narrations be interesting and appropriate to the subject, lively, and full of vigour; and let him not be sparing in their use, since a judicious employment of histories, parables, and examples, is one of the most powerful ways of interesting an audience, and of retaining their attention; and he will have done much, and made very decided progress in that difficult undertaking—the power of seizing his audience and causing himself to be attended to.

In doing this he will have done much, but, unfortunately, he will not have done everything. There have been ages of the Church, ages of faith and of simple piety, in which it was enough to instruct and to exhort. But these ages, alas! have passed away, and we live in times of a very different character; in times which are full of troubles peculiar to themselves; in times which bring with them their own peculiar duties and obligations. We live in times in which scoffing impiety and unbelief are rampant in the land; in which faltering professions, and half-hearted faith, have hardly shame enough remaining to them to cause them to hide themselves away in silence and obscurity. The Protestantism of the sixteenth century, and the infidel philosophy of later ages, are now receiving their full development in the terrible spirit of indifferentism, if not of positive unbelief, which is the curse of the times in which we live. The powers of earth and of hell have taken counsel together against the Lord and against His Christ, and they are able to work with a fulness of means, with an abundance of money, with a control over all the paraphernalia and machinery of a propagandism at once most active and most powerful, which renders their efforts as bold as they are unceasing. No class is safe from their attacks: youth in its innocence; manhood in its intellectual self-sufficiency;

age in its weakness; are equally exposed to their insidious advances. And the result is, that so many men, of whom we had reason to expect better things, go down, utterly and hopelessly, in this terrible warfare so many men of noble hearts, of generous feelings, o tender sympathies, men whom we are forced to love in spite of ourselves, surrender, almost without a struggle; so many men deny and throw away and trample upon the ensign of their Faith and their Belief almost before it is well within their grasp; so many men, who were surely destined for a happier fate, disgrace and dishonour their Religion and themselves, and, poor fools that they are, thus purchase for themselves the fulness of the everlasting vengeance of an outraged God. And for these, and for many other reasons, on which it is unnecessary to dwell at length in this place, the Christian orator of these times is compelled, not merely to instruct and exhort his flock, but also to support the doctrine which he preaches by sound reasoning and by solid argumentation.

Man is essentially a reasonable creature, and, in these times especially, we must be able to show him that he acts reasonably in admitting and adopting the truths which we propose to him. In eloquence, as in philosophy, conviction must be the result of sound reasoning, the fruit of just consequences deduced from

sound principles. We must be able to prove the assertions which we advance; we must be able to give a reason for the faith which is in us; we must be able to maintain, with simplicity and gravity, but with unflinching and unquestioned authority, the truths of divine Faith and the precepts of the divine Law. Faith and Reason must go hand-in-hand, and the two-fold light which emanates from them must be brought to shed its rays upon the truths which we teach, and upon the doctrine which we enforce. We call upon our people to submit their judgment and their intellect to the doctrines which we proclaim, to the Faith which we promulgate; but let us never forget that the subservience of intellect and of will which we require at their hands is to be a reasonable, an eminently reasonable submission: *Rationabile obsequium.*

From all this it follows that sound reasoning and solid argumentation must constitute the very nerve and muscle of modern pulpit oratory. The very skill of the introduction, and the very force of the appeal to the passions which will be scattered through the discourse, but which will have special place in the peroration, are, in a manner, subservient to this; since the exordium merely paves the way for the argumentation, whilst the appeal to the passions which occurs in the peroration rests upon this same argumentation as upon

a solid foundation. And, hence, too, it follows, that much of a preacher's success, and much of his power of seizing his audience, will depend upon his power of reasoning soundly, solidly, and well.

In the body, then, of his discourse, the preacher will be occupied principally with argumentation, or, in other words, with the management of those arguments from Holy Writ, from authority, or from natural reason enlightened by Faith, which he will bring forward in support of the great leading proposition to the establishment of which his sermon is principally directed.

In "Sacred Eloquence"* we have treated at considerable length of argumentation, of the position which it holds in the Christian oration, and of the conditions which are necessary to ensure its success. It will suffice to repeat in this place that the success of an argument may be said, in a broad general way, to depend upon the manner in which it is reasoned, and the manner in which it is amplified.

Taking it for granted that the arguments of the preacher will be discreetly selected, and with all due regard to the special circumstances of time, place, and person, which have to be considered; taking it equally for granted that these arguments will be skilfully

* Chap. viii. sec. i. et seqq. 3rd edition.

arranged, and with all due attention to that *palmare principium* of eloquence, *ut augeatur semper et increscat oratio,* we may now consider for a few moments in what the intrinsic force and effect of reasoning consists.

The art of reasoning has been broadly said to consist in the power of inferring and deducing that which is less, from that which is more fully known; or, in the power of proving something which seems doubtful from something which is taken as certain. The man who reasons begins by assuming, as essentially and necessarily certain, and admitted by all, some first principle, or some leading proposition, and then proceeds to show the necessary connection of some doubtful or disputed proposition with that which has been already admitted to be true. When this process is expressed and put into spoken words it is called an argument, and this faculty of evolving truth, of deducing one principle from another, is simply invaluable to the orator. An eminent authority has well said* that the preacher will infallibly compromise his ministry unless he be an adept in the art of reasoning, and the same writer adds that reasoning is the anatomy of eloquence: *Le discours est une chaîne, il faut que les anneaux tiennent.* The

* Besplas.

links of this chain are formed by solid arguments and by logical deductions. Let us have in the first place, says Fenelon,* principles and facts; then, consequences; and let our reasoning be so arranged that each argument will fulfil its own part, and contribute its own share to the strength of the whole; and St. Liguori says that every good discourse will take the form of sound and solid argumentation, not arranged, indeed, according to the method of the logician, but of the orator.

The orator who is not a logician, to whom the power of reasoning does not come readily and well, will hardly ever be anything more than a mere talker; a man who may fill the air with the sound of his voice, and succeed, perhaps, in making much noise, but who will never say anything worth listening to, or anything which will produce a lasting effect.

Yes, the preacher who is to succeed in seizing his audience must, in these days, be a skilful reasoner; ready in the use of argument; as quick in his defence of the truth as in his detection of error and falsehood.

It is scarcely necessary to say that there are three methods or forms of reasoning, a knowledge of each of which is equally useful and indispensable: the syllogism, the enthymeme, and the dilemma. The syllogism

* "Dial. sur l'Eloq.," tom. 10.

is the soul, the very essence, of a good argument. As we have already seen, every good and orderly discourse is easily reducible to a syllogism, of which the introduction contains the major, the body of the sermon the minor, the peroration the conclusion. What is true of the whole discourse is true of each part of it—that is, of each leading part or argument—it should be easily reducible to a syllogism; and it is as easy to a skilful and practical speaker to throw his arguments into logical order and shape as it is customary with unskilful or unprepared preachers to speak wildly and at random, without order, unity, or precision. But, it is also true, that he would be a strange preacher, as fantastic as he would be unreal, whose sermon should consist of a string of strict and formal syllogisms: hence it is, that a popular and practical speaker will hardly ever, perhaps never, present his arguments in the purely syllogistic form. He will employ instead the orator's syllogism, as Aristotle calls it—the enthymeme, which is a very easy and simple method of reasoning, and which, whilst in reality it is just as strict and orderly, is free from the formality of the logical syllogism. Frequently, he will present his argument in the shape of a dilemma. This mode of reasoning, *argumentum utrimque feriens*, is also very popular and practical, and is, of course, especially

useful in refuting false principles and specious objections.

But, whilst he is careful to reason closely and well, the popular preacher will be equally careful to fulfil the wise precept of Quintilian—viz., to keep all appearance of art or studied formality well out of sight and hidden away. *Ars artis celare artem,* is a precept which he can never afford to forget. The surest way to reason well is to study our subject thoroughly, and sift it to the very bottom, that thus we may more effectually distinguish between what is true and what is false—between what is specious and what is real. We must be rigorously exact in grounding our arguments upon principles which are not merely strictly true in themselves, but which are also clear and intelligible. We must seek the truth with sincerity and earnestness, and, having found it, we must lay it before our readers with equal sincerity, simplicity, and good sense. We must shrink from the use of sophistry, deceit, or double-dealing, in any form or shape. Our adversaries, if, unfortunately, the truths we proclaim should meet with such, must, equally with the members of our own flock, recognise the simplicity, the sincerity, and the straight-forwardness of our teaching. If our arguments be founded upon these great general principles; if all men are able to see at once, that our

only object is to preach the truth in all simplicity of heart, and with all honesty of purpose; if there be always a rigorous connection and sequence between the principles which we lay down, and the conclusions which we deduce from them; and finally, if our various arguments be connected by true rhetorical and skilful transitions, *i.e.*, by such forms of expression, or turns of thought, as spring from the very essence of the subject itself, and have equal relation to that which the preacher has already said as to that which he is about to say—such as follow the course of the reasoning, and bind the whole together, in an orderly and methodical arrangement; such turns of thought, in a word, as call for, and correspond with each other by an inevitable analogy, and not merely by an unexpected association, or by a purely artificial combination of words; we shall reason closely and well, and, by this means, make a great and sensible impression upon our hearers; we shall have gone a long way, and made most decided and tangible progress towards seizing our audience.

CHAPTER XV.

HOW TO PRESENT THE SUBJECT IN A POPULAR SHAPE—AMPLIFICATION, REAL AND FALSE—NATURE OF TRUE AMPLIFICATION—THE ESSENTIAL PART IT PLAYS IN THE SUCCESS OF THE SACRED ORATOR.

"UNA laus et propria oratoris," says Cicero, "summa laus eloquentiæ, amplificare rem ornando." It is one thing to render an argument intelligible and convincing; it is another, and a very different thing to render it persuasive, that is, powerful, effective, and well adapted for gaining the end which the speaker proposes to himself in employing it.

In the last chapter we endeavoured to show how much the success of the preacher, in seizing his audience, will depend upon his power of reasoning well, of rendering his arguments intelligible and convincing. His success, however, in this important matter, will depend still more upon his power of amplifying his arguments, as it is technically called; and this point we now propose to consider.

The power or faculty of reasoning well is a great thing, but it is not everything which the sacred orator requires, and with which, if happily he possess it, he may remain content. Reasoning simply addresses itself to the intellect and the understanding. When it has succeeded in convincing the understanding, it has accomplished its object, and it has no other part to play. But how rarely does a preacher happen to address an audience so intelligent, so learned, and with minds so highly trained, as to justify him in confining himself in his discourse to a series of purely logical, closely reasoned arguments; for, although we may conceive such a sermon to be intelligible, would it not most certainly be unpardonably dry and uninteresting. Such a discourse must be followed word by word, argument by argument, link by link. If one link of the chain of reasoning be lost, the whole argument is irretrievably gone, and the patient listener, spite his patience, finds himself hopelessly astray. Is it not certain that there are few men who are capable of thus closely following out a sustained and elaborate argument? Is it not equally certain that there are fewer still, who, even if they be able, are willing thus to follow a discourse with attention at full stretch, or who will not become simply wearied and disgusted with the logical dryness and the uninviting plainness of the sermon itself, and impatient of the mental labor and restraint which is thus imposed upon them?

Is it not most certain of all, that there are very few occasions on which the preacher can venture to be satisfied with delivering a discourse which addresses itself altogether, or even principally, to the understanding and the intellect of his hearers ?

As we only efficaciously move man to embrace that which is good, and to reject that which is evil, by acting upon his will, it necessarily follows that, in all ordinary circumstances, no sermon can be thoroughly successful, or gain its end, which does not move the heart and influence the will, as well as instruct the intellect and convince the understanding. And, hence it is, that the sacred orator has to aim at something more than the art of reasoning. It is not sufficient for him merely to form *good* arguments; he must know how to put his arguments persuasively, and this is done by their skilful amplification, as it is styled by rhetoricians.

Amplificare rem ornando: This is what Cicero means by the amplification of arguments. In plain English, it signifies the faculty of presenting them in a popular form, or, what is the same thing, the power of putting our arguments before an audience with all the force, vigour, beauty, and practical application, of which they are susceptible. And it is scarcely necessary to add, this faculty is the one which is most essential to our success, the one which will have the greatest prac-

tical influence upon the result of our endeavours to seize our audience, and render them subservient to our will.

For, as we have already said, a sermon is of its nature a persuasive oration, which is addressed to the people with the object of gaining them efficaciously to the service of God, of causing them to reject that which is evil, and to embrace that which is good. This is the primary end of all our preaching. But experience teaches us that the people are slow to understand the things of God, slow to comprehend and to seize the mysteries of the supernatural order. Hence, we cannot, as a rule, rest satisfied with our arguments merely because we have put them clearly, or rendered them fairly intelligible to ordinary intellects. We must go a step further than this; we must bring them home to every heart and soul; and in order to do this we must present them under different aspects and from different points of view. We must give warmth to what would otherwise be cold, life to what would otherwise remain inanimate and dead. We have sown the good seed by the solid instruction which we have imparted to our people. We must cause that good seed to grow and develop itself under the vivifying influence of the life-giving rain of amplification. Yes; if we would succeed, we must put our arguments in a popular form and shape. We speak,

and we see by the vacant faces, and the uninterested looks of our hearers, that they either do not comprehend what we say, or, if they comprehend it, that they neither appreciate its force, nor are moved by its influence. We must present it in a different shape, clothe it in another form of words, illustrate it by some homely comparison, or by a happy and well chosen example. Remembering that the real amplification of an argument, as of a discourse, consists in something more than in merely heaping words upon words, and phrases upon phrases, we must, if necessary, present our arguments again and again. We must bring them forward again and again in a new dress; we must labour to render them more clear, more intelligible, more vivid, more homely, and more full of human and practical interest; and we must continue to do this until the sparkling eyes, the sympathetic looks, the eager faces of our audience, tell us that our words have struck home at last; that they have made their mark upon the hearts of our hearers; that they have produced the full effect which we intended them to have upon the souls of those who listen to us. When this result has been accomplished we may be satisfied that our argument has been put in a popular shape; that it has been amplified *secundum regulas artis*, or, what is the same thing, according to the rules of good taste, of sound common

sense, of honest intention, and of laborious endeavour elevated and directed by one of the highest and most sublime motives which can actuate and move the human heart—zeal for the greater glory of God and the good of our brother's soul.

The man who is skilful in amplifying his arguments —in other words, the man who is really a popular speaker—has been well described by an accomplished writer as a man who knows how to enter in by the door of his hearers and make them go out by his own. He identifies himself with them. He strives to think as they think. He strives to feel as they feel. Nay, as often as it is possible, he strives to love what they love, since it is only thus that he can perfectly succeed in presenting his subject to them in such a manner as to appeal at once, and that most vividly, to their minds and hearts. For the time being, at least, he sees with their eyes, and he feels with their hearts, and hence his words, coming to his hearers, as they do, redolent of tender sympathy—of honest, kindly, nay, even if you will, of human interest and love—are simply irresistible. Thus, having spoken to the minds, and gained the hearts, of his hearers, he breathes upon them the breath of that life which is born of the Gospel of Christ, and gains them most surely and most powerfully to the high and the holy end which has been

before him from the first: he crushes their errors, he roots out and annihilates their vices, he leads them, trampling their sins and passions under foot the while, from the very door of hell to the gates of the kingdom of God. Such is the triumph of the popular preacher, of the man who knows how to seize his audience in the best meaning of the word—of the man who knows not only how to reason vigorously and well, but also how to bring his subject and his arguments before his hearers in their most true and their most attractive form, vivified and adorned with all those graces which can be imparted to them by keen conception, by brilliant images and ideas, by chaste and polished language—of the man who knows how to animate and brighten his spoken words with that strong, resistless element of practical application which springs from intimate knowledge of our subject and our audience, from boundless zeal for the glory of God, and for the best and the holiest interests of those to whom he speaks. And what a different result is this from that which attends so many of the sermons which are delivered now-a-days!—sermons which are nothing more than dreary metaphysical essays, interlarded here and there with a few texts from Scripture—sermons in which the preacher not unfrequently becomes hopelessly lost in the confusion of his own ideas, whilst the audience,

utterly despairing of following him into the lofty regions whither he has soared away, either quietly compose themselves to sleep, or listen, with what patience they may, until it shall please him once more to descend to their own more humble level!

It is, of course, much more easy to dwell upon the necessity to a popular preacher of this power of amplification than to show precisely in what it consists, or how it is to be acquired. Much will depend upon the grasp of mind possessed by the speaker; much upon his readiness of speech, the *copia verborum* which is the fruit of great practice and constant exercise in writing and speaking; most of all, perhaps, upon his thoroughly practical knowledge of his people, his warm interest in their welfare, the presence of that zeal which is ever prompting him to speak in season and out of season, and of that sound common sense which ever restrains his zeal within the limits of prudence and moderation, ever teaches him how to say the right thing at the right time and in the right way.

But, whilst much must necessarily be left to individual taste, capacity, and genius, in such a matter as this, still, there are certain general principles which the young preacher will do well to bear in mind, and which ought to dominate, or, at least, to direct, his efforts in the way of amplification, or, popular preaching.

And, in the first place, he will certainly never lose sight of the great and important truth, that the germ of all genuine eloquence is contained in the thought to be expressed, and not in the mere words by which it is sought to be realized. It is not easy to get many preachers to believe, or, at all events, to act upon this principle; but it is true, nevertheless. Thought and sentiment, not words or speech, constitute eloquence, and, most of all, popular eloquence. The true orator is as much under the necessity of employing spoken words as the mere impostor or the empty charlatan. But there is as vast a difference between the two as between the result of their speech. The one—forgetful or heedless of the great principle laid down by St. Augustine:* *Non doctor verbis serviat, sed verba doctori*—is vastly solicitous about the words he employs, vastly solicitous to please his audience, to tickle their ears by his affected elegance and his sounding phrases, whilst he bestows very little attention upon, and has very little real care about the idea which is contained, or is supposed to be contained, in these high-flown sentences. After listening to such a man the judgment you are compelled to pass upon him is probably this—that he said very nicely what he had to say, but that,

* "De Doctrina Christiana," lib. 14, chap. 61.

in reality, he had nothing to say. On the other hand, the true orator employs words, perhaps as copiously as the speaker to whom we have just referred; but in every case he merely employs the word in order to express an idea. In every case the mere word is subservient to the idea. Hence, the speaker is forgotten in the words which he utters, the words are forgotten in the ideas which they express, and the result is eloquent and successful speech. One of these men is the master and ruler of his words, the other is their servant and their slave. One of these men, directing his whole care and solicitude to the mere elaboration of his words and the trimming of his sentences, may, perhaps, succeed in pleasing for the moment, although he will never succeed in persuading his people that he is a man of God, or in producing any real or permanent effect. The other, far too deeply impressed with the dignity of his office, and the greatness of the interests at stake, to carry his own narrow views, his own petty interests, his own wretched vanity and self-seeking, into the pulpit with him, does not seek to please the ear but to change the heart; not to amuse and distract those amongst his hearers who may be sick unto death, but to cure and to save them. He does not disdain to employ those ornaments of language which may become his subject and his style of preaching, but he never

uses them for their own sake alone. If he employ them, it is to preach Christ and Him crucified; it is in order to bring the great truths of Faith more vividly and more powerfully home to the minds and the hearts of his hearers; and the success of his efforts is in direct proportion to the purity of his intention and the warmth of his zeal. Hence it is, that whilst the earnest preacher will certainly aspire to reason vigorously and well, to clothe his arguments in the most just and beautiful form of words, to present them in all their varied aspects to his people, he will be equally careful never to push the amplification of his discourse beyond its proper limit, and never to employ it except when it will render what he says more clear, more solid, more effective—except when it will cause his sermon to grow in interest and in force. Hence it is, that he will ever guard himself most carefully against becoming a mere spin-text, or a mere vapid talker. Hence it is, that he will ever carefully distinguish between true fecundity and empty diffusiveness; between that true fecundity which is the result of a deep and earnest meditation of our subject, and that diffusiveness which merely seeks to hide the absence of thought under a cloud of soulless words and meaningless phrases.

If it be true that the source of all real and genuine eloquence is to be found in the thought to be conveyed,

in the sentiment to be expressed, does it not follow that everything which contributes towards the cultivation of a man's taste, which helps to elevate his style, to render him a man of pure mind and of deep feeling, to ennoble and dignify the whole range of his ideas and the whole tenor of his life, helps at the same time to cultivate and develop those faculties which are brought most prominently into play when he addresses his fellow-men—those faculties upon whose perfect cultivation and development so much of his success depends? And does it not follow, with equal clearness, that, as the foundation of all true eloquence is to be found in the thought to be expressed, so, deep and profound meditation of our subject and our audience will furnish the only safe source of all genuine amplification.

For, if no mere collection of words, however eloquent, no mere heaping up of phrases, however polished, can ever constitute useful or effective amplification of an argument, it follows that amplification will only be genuine just in proportion as it is a useful or necessary development of that argument. Hence, all true amplification, as all solid reasoning, must have its foundation in deep and earnest thought. The man who would amplify with effect must return again and again to the very viscera of his argument for the happy thoughts and the felicitous illustrations with which to

develop it. Buffon remarks that it is only by means of profound meditation, and of deep and earnest thought, that the mind of man is made truly fruitful. If this be so, does it not necessarily follow, that the man who would speak eloquently and well upon any subject, must study that subject with all his heart and soul, and strive his very utmost to realize it in all its varied bearings, in all its fruitful application. He must fathom its lowest depths. He must realize the most minute details which are proper to it, the special circumstances which give it a life and character of its own. He must study how to bring out these circumstances and details in the most striking and most lively colours. He must strive to discover what turns of expression, what figures of speech, what contrasts or comparisons, what inductions and conclusions, what accumulation of ideas, or what careful working out of leading thoughts, will contribute most powerfully, most clearly, and most effectually to the true development of his subject, to the vivid realization of those substantial details and those leading circumstances which, as we have just said, animate and give it life. Just in proportion as he succeeds in this will he succeed in clothing the bare skeleton of his discourse in vigorous, breathing, living flesh and muscle.

But—and this brings us back again to a great prin-

ciple which has been asserted more than once already—he will not succeed in this unless he be a man of study and reflection; a man to whom the habit of thought and of studious labour is as familiar as his daily bread. The mind of a thoughtless, heedless man—the mind which is poured out upon a thousand petty frivolities, and distracted by a thousand petty cares—will never be the fountain to produce those noble thoughts, those sublime ideas, those keen and generous sympathies, which sway the minds and hearts of other men. Fenelon remarks with great force that the failure of many preachers, of men not deficient in natural talent and ability, is to be traced to their want of study, and to that ignorance which is its natural result. Such men never acquired, or have forgotten, if they ever acquired it, that solid fund of professional knowledge, as we may call it, and of sound information, which are simply essential to the Christian orator, and without which he *must* be unprepared to speak. Such ready accurate knowledge, such a fund of exact and solid information, cannot be acquired in an hour. It must be the fruit of a life of study. Men attempt to speak without possessing this fund of information, and, hence, having no foundation to fall back upon, they speak at random and without effect. It may be that they know how to speak, but they have nothing to say. Possessing no

ready and expedite knowledge of the principles of sound philosophy or of Gospel teaching, they only succeed in emasculating the grandest ideas and the most sublime truths. By their most brilliant phrases, and their most ingenious figures of speech, they never succeed in disguising the innate and repulsive deformity of the dead body which they labour to clothe in these gaudy garments. They never succeed in making these dry bones live; probably they never even succeed in galvanizing and imparting to them a momentary semblance of life and vitality. They never succeed in breathing the breath of life into that lifeless frame. Spite of their ill-directed efforts to animate and give it being, it remains cold and dead to the end. These are the men of whom it has been bitterly written—that they have nothing to say, and they say it. And, what, perhaps, is most painful of all, is, that many men who were destined by God and nature to become true orators—men who begin well, and whose after-career promises to be great and glorious—end in this miserable way simply because, when they have once acquired that gift, which is too often fatal to its possessor, a great facility of speech, they give up the habit of study, the habit of careful and studious reading, without which no man, how great soever his talents or his natural gifts may be, will ever continue to be really and truly elo-

quent, will ever be able to speak with force and effect to a body of intelligent, educated, and thoughtful men.

Yes, the source of all genuine amplification must be found in deep and earnest study of our subject. But this study must not be a mere study of our subject in the abstract. It must be taken in the concrete; that is to say, the subject of the discourse must be studied face to face, in all its bearings and all its varied relations, to the audience to whom it is to be addressed. It is easy enough, or, at all events, it is not so very difficult, to speak of things in general—to treat an abstract subject in a vague and abstract way. But such speaking will never be eloquent. The only true eloquence is that in which one man speaks, out of the depths of his own heart and soul, to the living, breathing, individual men who sit at his feet, waiting to be taught, waiting to learn whether he who undertakes to teach them has fathomed the depths of their spiritual wants, the violence of their passions, the keenness of their temptations, the weakness of their faint and trembling souls, the reality and special characteristics of the conflict in which they are engaged, the special means by which they, the individual men who listen to him, are, if ever, to gain the victory—alas! how dubious and uncertain—upon which so much depends.

Hence it is that so much of the success of popular

preaching, of genuine amplification, will ever be measured by the force and reality with which the preacher is able to apply his subject, and bring it home practically, and, so to speak, individually, to his hearers. The following sketch of a popular preacher illustrates our meaning in a striking manner :*—

"He spoke from his own nature to the nature of others. He was himself a most inartificial man. He knew human nature well. He studied it in himself and in others. He knew *man*, how he thinks, and feels, and acts. He drew his knowledge not from copies and books, but from the living original. Men felt when they heard him, that they were listening to a preacher who knew not only books and theories and systems, but humanity, both in its fallen and its restored state—in its wants, woes, diseases, remedies, and varieties ; one who could sympathize with them as well as teach them. When on a Sunday morning they came worn and weary with the trials, toils, and cares of the six days' labour, and placed themselves under the sound of his mellifluous voice, they felt sure of not being tantalized and disappointed with a cold intellectualism, or a mere logical demonstration, or a metaphysical abstraction, or a wordy

* "Papers on Preaching by a Wykehamist," p. 230.

nothing, which would have given them a stone when they asked for bread; or with something religiously poetic, which would have been offering them flowers when they wanted meat; but he fed them with food convenient for them, and satisfied the cravings of their nature with what satisfied his own."

To be able to speak in this manner we must know our people thoroughly and well. We must be in continual and kindly intercourse with them. We must have a lively interest in their welfare, a great anxiety to procure their advancement in the service of God, a generous enthusiasm in aiding them to overcome and conquer their passions and vices. We must be the Pastors of our people in the fullest and truest meaning of the word, and we must never forget that we, Catholic priests, enjoy advantages in this respect which are peculiar to ourselves, and which, if they be properly employed, must necessarily give a practical and most powerful direction to our efforts which no other body of men can ever hope to possess.

CHAPTER XVI.

WORD PAINTING—ITS FORCE, ITS EMPLOYMENT, AND ITS PROPER PLACE IN POPULAR PREACHING—HOW IT MAY BE ABUSED—FATHER PAUL SEGNERI—ROWLAND HILL—DR. NEWMAN, ETC.

ALTHOUGH the germ of all true and genuine eloquence is contained in the thought to be conveyed, rather than in the words in which it is expressed; although the spoken word will depend for much of its actual effect upon the warmth, earnestness, and internal feeling of him who speaks; it is no less true that the popular preacher must be able to paint with vividness those sentiments which he feels so deeply, that he must be a master of that power of minute and graphic description which is technically called "word-painting."

In this, more, perhaps, than in anything else, the true orator, the finished workman, is distinguished from the mere journeyman. The latter contents himself with a bare enunciation of the facts, or incidents, which he desires to express: as, for example: Christ was scourged

at the pillar and died upon a cross for our sins. The former, concentrating all the powers of his intellect and his imagination upon the scene or action which he desires to depict; studying deeply the various circumstances of time, place, and person which may be most intimately connected with it; at length succeeds in obtaining a vivid and life-like conception of the subject of his contemplation, a conception so vivid and life-like indeed, as to render his thoughts, so to speak, tangible and real, and to give to the "airy nothings" of his own mental creation "a local habitation and a name." But, he does more than this. Having succeeded, in the first place, in obtaining for himself this vivid and life-like conception of the action or scene which is before his mind, he proceeds to paint the creations of his imagination in "spoken words," and he does this with such a happy fulness of expression, with such a keen, direct, and pointed application of the terms which he employs, with such a depth of inward feeling manifesting itself in the tones of his voice, in the movements of his countenance, in the very deportment of his frame, as to produce an almost irresistible effect upon his hearers. Every circumstance, every detail, the very words of the actor, are painted with such a reality and a vivid power as to bring the whole scene before the audience in the most natural and striking manner

The present is forgotten in the description of the past; time and space are annihilated by the spell of the orator's words. As Dr. Newman says so beautifully, "he speaks not only distinctè and splendidè, but also aptè. He writes passionately, because he feels keenly; forcibly, because he conceives vividly. When his imagination wells up, it overflows in ornament; when his heart is touched, it thrills along his verse. He always has the right word for the right idea, and never a word too much. If he is brief, it is because few words suffice; if he is lavish of them, still each word has its mark, and aids, not embarrasses, the vigorous march of his elocution. He expresses what all feel, but all cannot say."

And when we remember that a sermon is, of its nature, a persuasive oration, it must at once be evident that this true "*copia verborum*," this faculty of graphic description, is essentially necessary to the successful orator. The persuasive oration depends for its success, as we have already seen, upon the force and effect with which it is able to appeal to the feelings of men, and move their hearts and wills most efficaciously. But, as the feelings or passions are only, as a general rule, efficaciously moved by bringing their proper objects before them in a striking and vigorous manner, it follows that the persuasive oration must ultimately depend, for a very considerable portion of its success, upon the

manner in which these objects are painted by the orator, and presented to his hearers. And it is equally plain that he will best succeed in this who, possessing the most intimate knowledge of the human heart and of the springs by which it is directed and governed, is best able to depict, in living and spoken words, those varied circumstances which surround the objects of the passions, and give them their reality and their human interest. In other words, no man will ever be a popular orator who cannot successfully manage and depict the varied details which make up the sum of human life, with all its hopes, and joys, and fears—who cannot paint in vivid, glowing, or pathetic terms, the varied circumstances which give the objects of the passions their life and being.*

It is scarcely necessary to say that the popular preachers of every age were men who fully recognized the necessity of graphic speaking, and who excelled in that power of description, that power of expressing vivid thoughts in vivid words, which we call word-painting. And anyone who would judge for himself what consummate artists the early and the mediæval church possessed in such men as St. Chrysostom, St. Basil, St. Augustine, St. Bernard, St. Anthony of Padua, St.

* "Sacred Eloquence." Chap. ix. sec. i. 2.

Bonaventure, St. Gall, St. Bernardine of Sienna, St. Francis of Assisi, St. Dominic, and a host of others, will find a fund of truly interesting information in the fifth book of the second volume of that most learned, and, in many respects, most wonderful book, the "Mores Catholici, or Ages of Faith." As we read of the marvellous gifts of eloquence which God had bestowed upon some of these saintly men, we are not astonished to learn that it often seemed to the simple folk of these ages of faith as if they could hear the voices of the idols, which they had broken and cast into the flames at the word of the preacher, wailing over the tops of the mountains, or dying away in plaintive murmurs amid the impenetrable shadows of their gloomy woods and forests. Still less are we astonished to learn that twenty thousand persons, after hastening by night to secure places in the field in which St. Anthony of Padua was to preach, should, after his sermon, have committed to the flames immense piles of wicked books, cards, and other objects of licentiousness, of great price and of most costly description. Truly, these were triumphs of popular preaching! triumphs of men who knew how to utter great thoughts in great and burning, though, perhaps, in plain and homely words.

What should we think now-a-days, and what effect would it produce upon us, if a man with the intense

earnestness, the plain blunt outspokenness, of Father Paul Segneri, were to present himself to one of the dainty, perfumed, over-dressed, luxurious congregations of the nineteenth century, and address them in such words as the following, which are extracted from two of his well-known sermons, one on hell, and the other on the danger of sin:—*

"What else, after all, have I this morning to do, than pour forth two copious streams of inconsolable grief for the many souls who see hell open before them, and yet do not draw back, but boldly press on to launch themselves into its flames? Ah, no: stop, ye wretched beings, for a moment; stop—and before plunging with a headlong leap into that abyss, let me demand of you in the words of the same Isaiah: *Which of you can dwell with the devouring fire? Which of you can dwell with everlasting burnings?* (xxxiii. 14. Vulg). Excuse me, my people. For this once thou art not to leave the church, unless thou hast first made a satisfactory reply to my question—*Which of you can dwell with everlasting burnings?* What sayest thou, O lady, who art so tender in cherishing thy flesh? Canst

* The "Quaresimale" of P. Paolo Segneri, translated from the original Italian, by James Ford, A.M., Prebendary of Exeter Cathedral.

thou *dwell with everlasting burnings?* Now thou canst not bear it, if the point of a needle at thy work lightly stain thy delicate skin. How thinkest thou then? Wilt thou be able to endure those terrific engines, by which thou must feel thyself dismembered, disjointed, and with an everlasting butchery crushed into powder? What sayest thou, O man, who art so intent on providing for thy personal comforts? Canst thou *dwell with everlasting burnings?* Now thou canst not tolerate the breath of a poor man, who by coming near thee offends in the least thy organs of smell. Wilt thou be able to stand those foul stenches, by which thou must feel thyself poisoned, stifled, and with an everlasting suffocation pressed down to the ground? And thou, what sayest thou for thyself, O priest, who art so negligent in the discharge of thy duties? Canst thou *dwell with everlasting burnings?* Now thou art not able to remain in the choir of thy church a single hour without indecently looking about thee, without being restless, without indulging thy tongue in every kind of gossip: how then does it strike thee? Wilt thou be able to remain through all the ages of eternity, I say, not reclining on thy elegantly carved stall, but rather stretched out on an iron framework on a flaming couch, there to be listening to the demons' howls ringing in thy ears? What sayest thou,

O glutton? What sayest thou, O slanderer? What sayest thou, O libertine?—thou young man, indulging thyself so wantonly in all thy heart's desires? Canst thou *dwell with everlasting burnings?* Alas! who, who among us can? And yet, why do I thus enlarge on the case of other people? Excuse me: of myself, of myself I ought to speak; of myself, an ecclesiastic, it is true, as cannot be denied from my dress, and yet a wretched creature, so unmortified, so impetuous, so vain, and so averse to that true penitence which my sins call for! If I am not able to remain for a short time before the presence of my Lord in tears for my sins, if I am so fond of my own ease, if I am so studious of my own reputation, how can I hereafter, wretch that I am, stand for ever and ever at the feet of Lucifer, the place assigned to such as me; to such, as, having undertaken to confer benefits on other men, and been gifted accordingly for that purpose with so much light, knowledge, and many endowments, have betrayed my word by my actions? Ah, Lord! have pity, have pity. We have sinned; we know it; we confess it. "We have done ungodly, we have dealt unrighteously in all thy ordinances" (Baruch. ii. 12). And therefore we cannot make bold to ask Thee *not* to punish us. Punish us, then, since we well deserve it. *Reward the proud after their deserving* (Ps. xciv. 2). Only, in Thine infinite mercy, may it please Thee not to sentence our souls to

hell. O hell! O hell! the mere mention of thee is enough to overwhelm us with horror."—*Torments of Hell.*

The other extract, which is no less powerful than the one just quoted, is taken from the introduction to his sermon on Ash Wednesday. It commences in the following terribly earnest language:—

"I come before you, my respected hearers, to deliver a most mournful message. The thought only of what I have to tell you strikes a cold chill at my heart through intense horror. And yet, what good can come of my silence? or, what would concealment avail? I will at once declare my message. All here present, whether young or old, masters or servants, nobles or commoners, all of you must at last die! *It is appointed unto all men once to die.* (Heb. ix. 27.) Alas! what do I behold? On hearing so tremendous an announcement, not one among you is moved: not one of you changes colour: not one of you looks altered. So far from it, I cannot but perceive that you are secretly inclined rather to regard me under a ludicrous aspect, as a person coming here to pass off, as something new, a story that has been told you over and over again. And where is the man, you ask me, who at this time of day does not know that we must all die? *What man is he that liveth, and shall not see death?* (Ps. lxxxix. 47.) This is what we are continu-

ally hearing from so many pulpits: this is what we are continually reading on so many tombs: this is what so many corpses, though silent, are continually sounding in our ears. In short, this is something we know already.—Do you know this? How is it possible you should? Why, tell me; are you not the very same persons who only yesterday were running about the city in all the gaiety of your Carnival, some representing the lover, some the maniac, some the parasite? Are you not the same persons who joined with such eagerness in the dance, who allowed yourselves the excess of dissipation, who acted like so many senseless heathens in giving yourselves over to licentiousness? Was it you, then, who were sitting with such evident delight at the theatres? Was it you who were speaking so rapturously in the boxes? Answer me. I ask you, did you not pass this night, the night before Ash-Wednesday, in riotous self-indulgence, and in all the common amusements of worldly life and society—would to heaven, that it may not have been even in pleasures still less suited to your characters? And, while you behave in this manner, do you still pretend to know for a certainty that you must die? Oh, what blindness! Oh, what insensibility! Oh, what madness! Oh, what wickedness! . . . However, for the sake of argument, I will suppose that you do in some sense know this: I will even give you credit

for freely confessing it. *Remember, O man! remember that thou art dust!* Here, then, I have the very thing I desire of you: for it will now be my business to prove how daring is the presumption of those, who, while they acknowledge this truth, live one single moment in deadly sin."—*Danger of Sin.*

We may easily imagine the horror, the surprise, and, most likely, the indignation with which one of our fashionable audiences would listen to such words as these. There are few preachers now-a-days who, even if they possessed the power, would dare to utter them. Perhaps the nearest approach to this terribly plain, practical, earnest speaking which our day has produced, is to be found in Dr. Newman's powerful sermon on "The Neglect of Divine Calls and Warnings," where he describes in words which are appalling by their earnest plainness, their terrible point and application, the career in life, and the death of the easy-living, comfortable, careless Christian, who, in the cant of the day, lives respected and beloved, and dies universally lamented, to be buried for eternity in the flames of hell.

Nor has the appreciation of this great principle, the absolute necessity to the orator of graphic description, and of plain popular modes of speech, been confined to the preachers of the Catholic Church. It is one of those

truths which all men who aim at popular and effective speaking necessarily feel, but which only the favoured few are able to realise in their perfection and fulness. No doubt it was this principle which influenced the grim Puritans to bestow such quaint, and, oftentimes, coarse titles upon the works by which they sought to influence the minds and hearts of the men of their day. Hence, when we read of "Baruch's Sore gently opened and the salve skilfully applied;" "The Snuffers of Divine Love;" "The Spiritual Mustard Pot to make Souls sneeze with Devotion;" "A Pack of Cards to win Christ;" "High Heeled-shoes for Limping Christians;" etc., etc., we can understand at once the principle upon which the writers of these extravagant pamphlets acted, and the motives by which they were governed, in the selection of such extraordinary titles; but we can note with equal readiness the absence of that good taste, and of that refining influence, which true religion and education can alone impart.

The Rev. E. P. Hood, in his "Lamps, Pitchers, and Trumpets,"* a very able and most interesting work, although disfigured by some unnecessary and uncalled-for sneers against Popery and Rome, tells an amusing

* "Lamps, Pitchers, and Trumpets," by Edward Paxton Hood. London: Jackson, Walford, and Hodder, Paternoster-row.

story, which illustrates so pointedly the grave mistakes into which plain-speaking, when not refined by education, and elevated by the sanctifying influences of a religious training, may lead even honest, earnest men, that we quote it at full length:—

"It may be sixty years since there frequently came to Bristol a well known Calvinistic Methodist preacher of that day—in a day when flattering titles were not very lavishly distributed—called Sammy Breeze by the multitudes who delighted in his ministry. He came periodically from the mountains of Cardiganshire, and spoke with tolerable efficiency in English. Our friend was in the chapel when, as was not unusual, two ministers, Sammy Breeze and another, were to preach. The other took the first place—a young man with some tints of academical training, and some of the livid lights of a then only incipient Rationalism on his mind. He took for his text—"He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned;" but he condoned the heavy condemnation, and, in an affected manner, shaded off the darkness of the doom of unbelief, very much in the style of another preacher, who told his hearers that he 'feared lest they should be doomed to a place which good manners forbade him from mentioning.' The young man also grew senti-

mental, *and begged pardon* of an audience rather more polite than usual, for the sad statement made in the text. 'But, indeed,' said he, 'he that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not—indeed, I regret to say, I beg your pardon for uttering the terrible truth—but indeed he shall be sentenced to a place which here I dare not mention.' Then rose Sammy Breeze. He began—'I shall take the same text to-night which you have just heard. Our young friend has been fery foine to-night; he has told you some very polite things. I am not fery foine, and I am not polite; but I will preach a little bit of Gospel to you, which is this—"He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be tamned," *and I begs no pardons.*' He continued—'I do look round on this chapel, and I do see people all fery learned and intellectual. You do read books, and you do study studies, and fery likely you do think that you can mend God's Book, and are fery sure you can mend me. You have great—what you call thoughts—and poetries. But I will tell you one little word, and you must not try to mend that—but if you do it will be all the same. It is this, look you—"He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be tamned," *and I begs no pardons.* And then I do look round your chapel, and I do see you are fine people, well dressed people, well-

to-do people. You are not only pious, but you have fery fine hymn-books and cushions, and some red curtains, for I do see you are fery rich, and you have got your moneys, and are getting fery proud. But I will tell you it does not matter at all, and I do not mind it at all—not one little bit—for I must tell you the truth, and the truth is—"He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be tamned," *and I begs no pardons.* And now,' continued the preacher, 'you will say to me, "What do you mean by talking to us in this way? Who are you, sir?" And now I will tell you I am Pilly Preeze. I have come from the mountains of Cardiganshire on my Master's business, and His message I must deliver. If you will never hear me again, I shall not matter much; but while you shall hear me you shall hear me, and this is His word to me, and in me to you—"He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be tamned," *and I begs no pardons.*' But the scene in the pulpit was a trifle to the scene in the vestry. There the deacons were in a state of great anger with the blunt teacher; and one, the relative—we believe the ancestor—of a well-known religious man in Bristol, exclaimed—'Mr. Breeze, you have strangely forgotten yourself to-night, sir. We did not expect that you would have behaved in this way. We have always been very glad to see

you in our pulpit; but your sermon to-night, sir, has been most insolent—shameful.' He wound up a pretty smart condemnation by saying—'In short, I don't understand you.' 'Ho! ho! What! you say you don't understand me. *Eh!* look you then, I will tell you I *do* understand you. Up in our mountains, we have one man there, we do call him *exciseman*. He comes along to our shops and stores, and says, "What have you here? Anything contraband here?" And if it is all right, the good man says, "Step in, Mr. Exciseman; come in, look you." He is all fair, and open, and above-board. But if he has anything secreted there, he does draw back surprised, and he makes a fine face, and says, "Sir, I don't understand you." Now you do tell me you don't understand me; but I do understand you, gentlemen—I do; and I do fear you have something contraband here. And now I will say good-night to you; but I must tell you one little word—that is: "He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be tamned;" *and I begs no pardons.*'"

We have no more reason to doubt that Sammy Breeze was quite in earnest, than that he was a master of the art of plain and graphic speaking. But it is very evident that plain speaking in this case was carried

beyond all due limit, and that the speaker was guilty of violations of good taste and propriety which were not condoned by the directness and point of his speech, and which a man of liberal education and refined mind would not have committed.

Few men were more talked about in their day, or acquired a greater name, at least amongst a certain class, for eloquent plain-speaking, than Rowland Hill. And, yet, few men were ever responsible for more violent attacks upon good taste, or were more forgetful of that gravity and decorum of speech which alone become the minister of God, and the Gospel which he preaches. Few men ever said, as few would have the courage to attempt to say, so many "good things" in the pulpit; but we are compelled to add that the majority of these good things would have better become the mouth of a jester than of a minister of the Gospel; and that, although they might have graced a dinner table, they were sadly out of place in a Christian pulpit. To say nothing of his well-known charity-sermon jokes, about hanging all the misers in the congregation up by the heels, that the money might run out of their pockets into the plates, etc., etc., what could be in worse taste than the following illustration of the state of the unconverted sinner, which we have also taken from Mr. Hood's work:—

"The mere professor reminds me of a sow that I saw two hours ago luxuriating in her stye when almost over head and ears in the mire. Now, suppose any of you were to take Bess (the sow) and wash her, and suppose after having dressed her in a silk gown, and put a smart cap upon her head, you were to take her into any of your parlours, and were to set her down to tea in company, she might look very demure for a time, and might not give even a single grunt; but you would observe that she occasionally gave a sly look towards the door, which showed that she felt herself in an uncomfortable position; and the moment she perceived that the door was open she would give another proof of the fact by running out of the room as fast as she could. Follow the sow, with her silk gown and her fancy cap, and in a few seconds you will find that she has returned to her stye, and is again wallowing in the mire. Just so it is with the unrenewed man: sin is his element; and though he may be induced from a variety of motives to put on at times a show of religion, you will easily perceive that he feels himself to be under unpleasant restraints, and that he will return to his sins, whenever an opportunity of doing so, unknown to his acquaintances, presents itself to him."

Compare this undignified language, which is as coarse

as it is unbecoming, with the following magnificent specimens of powerful and graphic word-painting :—

"There was a blood-shedding once, which did all other sheddings of blood by far outvie; it was a man — a God — that shed his blood. Come and see it! Here is a garden, dark and gloomy; the ground is crisp with the cold frost of midnight: between those gloomy olive-trees I see a man, I hear him groan out his life in prayer; hearken angels, hearken men, and wonder; it is the Saviour groaning out his soul. Come and see him. Behold his brow! O heavens! drops of blood are streaming down his face and from his body; every pore is open, and it 'sweats!' but not the sweat of men that toil for bread, it is the sweat of one that toils for heaven—he 'sweats great drops of blood.' This is the blood-shedding without which there is no remission. Follow that man farther —they have dragged him with sacrilegious hands from the place of his prayer and of his agony, and they have taken him to the Hall of Pilate; they seat him in a chair and mock him, a robe of purple is put on his shoulders in mockery; and mark his brow—they have put about it a crown of thorns, and the crimson drops of gore are rushing down his cheeks! Ye angels! the drops of gore are rushing down on his cheeks. But turn

aside that purple robe for a moment. His back is bleeding. Tell me, demons, who did this? They lift up the thongs still dripping clots of gore; they scourge and tear his flesh, and make a river of blood to run down his shoulders! That is the shedding of blood without which there is no remission. Not yet have I done: they hurry him through the streets, they fling him on the ground, they nail his hands and feet to the transverse wood, they hoist it into the air, they dash it into its socket, it is fixed, and on it hangs the Christ of God! Why is it that this story doth not make men weep? I told it ill, you say. Ay, so I did; I will take all the blame. But, sirs, if it were told as ill as men could speak, were our hearts what they should be, we should bleed away our lives in sorrow."*

The above extract, which is said to be the production of a self-educated man, is a beautiful and pathetic piece of word-painting; sharp and clear, and quaint as some old Gothic picture that attracts you at once by an indefinite charm, the presence of which you keenly and intimately feel, but which you know not how to describe. In these plain, simple, even rugged words, the suffering Saviour is brought before us with a reality which is

* "Papers on Preaching," by a Wykehamist.

almost painful; the last few lines of the extract are inimitable, in the simple earnestness, and the tender, but unlaboured pathos of their expression.

We shall conclude these illustrations of the art of word-painting, as applied to sacred oratory, by an extract from Dr. Newman, who, as Mr. Hood so eloquently and truthfully remarks, is "great everywhere, and in everything great, with a Michael-Angelo-like greatness, struggling, massive, earnest, hurling his books about like thunderbolts," and who is specially great in his unrivalled power of amplification, a power in which he is always charming, but not unfrequently absolutely terrible by his graphic plainness and directness of speech:—

"O the change, my brethren"—he is describing the death-bed of the man who has lost his soul—"the dismal change at last, when the sentence has gone forth, and life ends, and eternal death begins! The poor sinner has gone on so long in sin, that he has forgotten he has sin to repent of. He has learned to forget that he is living in a state of enmity to God. He no longer makes excuses, as he did at first. He lives in the world, and believes nothing about the Sacraments nor puts any trust in a priest, if he falls in with one. Perhaps he has hardly ever heard the Catholic religion mentioned, except for the purpose of abuse; and never

has spoken of it but to ridicule it. His thoughts are taken up with his family and with his occupation; and if he thinks of death, it is with repugnance, as what will separate him from this world, not with fear, as what will introduce him to another. He has ever been strong and hale. He has never had an illness. His family is long-lived, and he reckons he has a long time before him. His friends die before him, and he feels rather contempt at their nothingness, than sorrow at their departure. He has just married a daughter, and established a son in life, and he thinks of retiring from the world, except that he is at a loss to know how he shall employ himself when out of it; and then he begins to muse awhile over himself and his prospects, and he is sure of one thing, that the Creator is simple and mere benevolence, and he is indignant and impatient when he hears eternal punishment spoken of. And so he fares, whether for a long time or a short; but whatever the period, it must have an end, and at last the end comes. Time has gone forward noiselessly, and comes upon him like a thief in the night; at length the hour of doom strikes, and he is taken away.

"Perhaps, however, he was a Catholic, and then the very mercies of God have been perverted by him to his ruin. He has rested on the Sacraments, without caring to have the proper dispositions for attending them. At

one time he had lived in neglect of religion altogether; but there was a date when he felt a wish to set himself right with his Maker; so he began, and has continued ever since, to go to Confession and Communion at convenient intervals. He comes again and again to the priest; he goes through his sins; the priest is obliged to take his account of them, which is a very defective account, and sees no reason for not giving him absolution. He is absolved, as far as words can absolve him; he comes again to the priest when the season comes round; again he confesses, and again he has the form pronounced over him. He falls sick, he receives the last Sacraments; he receives the last rites of the Church; and he is lost. He is lost, because he has never really turned his heart to God; or, if he had some poor measure of contrition for a while, it did not last beyond his first or second confession. He soon came to the Sacraments without any contrition at all; he deceived himself, and left out his principal and most important sins. Somehow he deceived himself into the notion that they were not sins, or not mortal sins; for some reason or other he was silent, and his confession became as defective as his contrition. Yet this scanty show of religion was sufficient to soothe and stupify his conscience; so he went on year after year, never making a good confession, communicating in mortal sin, till he

fell ill; and then, I say, the viaticum and holy oil were brought to him, and he committed sacrilege for his last time—and so he went to his God."—*Neglect of Divine Calls and Warnings.*"*

We venture to think that, as a piece of plain, vivid, earnest, terribly earnest description, the above extract can scarcely be surpassed. We have quoted it and the other extracts contained in this chapter at considerable length, because they illustrate much more forcibly than any feeble words of ours could do, the nature of word-painting, the real power which the possession of it puts into the hands of the true orator, and the flagrant abuses to which it is liable when treated carelessly, unskilfully, or by a man who is ignorant of its scope, its method, and its means. We recommend a careful study of these extracts to the young preacher, who is honestly anxious to distinguish what is true from what is false, the genuine gold from the glittering tinsel. And it must be a matter of honest pride to us, as Catholic priests, to reflect that we possess amongst ourselves men who, whilst they are the most perfect models we could propose to ourselves for imitation, have supplied us with copious writings whose elegance of style, and beauty of diction,

* "Discourses addressed to Mixed Congregations."

are only equalled by the solidity of their matter, and the scrupulous exactness of their doctrinal teaching. In Newman, "with his massive greatness," and in Manning, with "his words persuasive as the air"—to use once more the eloquent language of the writer whom we have already more than once quoted—"with his words sometimes terrible as the air alive with lightnings, or auroras, or spectral armies fighting in the clouds," we possess two masters of sacred eloquence whom we may follow with unwavering footsteps, with no misgiving that they will lead us into the quagmires of doctrinal error, of unclerical levity, or ungentlemanly bad taste. In their company we may pluck the rose without any fear of the lurking thorn; we may sip the honey without any apprehension of imbibing the hidden poison. We cordially agree with Mr. Hood—it is our pride and our consolation to believe it—that Manning and Newman are amongst the most eminent men in England to-day; that their writings "contain fountains for many sermons, for years of consolation and light; that many a sermon, or even page, may be a consensus for the conscience, for the mind, for the faith." But here our agreement with Mr. Hood must cease. We cannot express our grief with him, "that they are where they are—in Rome." It seems to us, that when, with the piercing intellects and the honest earnest hearts which God had given

them, these great men had fathomed, to its lowest depths, the rottenness and insufficiency of the system of the rights of the individual and private judgment, in which Mr. Hood is proud to rest with such complacent thankfulness and satisfaction, Rome became "their legitimate abode"—whatever Mr. Hood may think to the contrary.

CHAPTER XVII.

HOW TO CONCLUDE—THE DANGER OF UNDULY PROLONGING THE DISCOURSE—VARIOUS METHODS OF CONCLUDING—THE CRISIS OF THE SERMON, HOW IT IS TO BE MANAGED, AND THE IMMENSE IMPORTANCE OF EMPLOYING IT PROPERLY—RECAPITULATION, ITS NATURE AND OBJECTS — THE APPEAL TO THE PASSIONS, AND HOW IT IS TO BE CONDUCTED—EXAMPLES: MASSILLON, SAINT LIGUORI, SEGNERI, MANNING, NEWMAN.

THE great leading idea which was contained, and expressed implicitly or explicitly, in the proposition of his discourse, having been sufficiently explained, developed, and maintained by solid argumentation—having, by the warmth of his eloquence, the force of his reasoning, the earnestness of his zeal, won every heart, and carried every intellect captive to the views which he propounded, and the obligations which he laid down—having secured, in one word, the assent of his hearers, or, at least, having brought them to that

point, or crisis, in his discourse, in which all that is needed is merely the finishing stroke to win their assent to those practical deductions, and those special applications, which are the necessary and essential fruits of every good sermon, the time has arrived for the preacher to conclude, and bring his address to a becoming close.

Nothing is more fatal to the success of a discourse than to prolong it beyond due limits. We speak for a certain purpose, with a certain object in view. When that object has been attained, the motive which urged us to speak, and which alone justified our speaking, has ceased; and if we attempt to prolong our discourse beyond this point we shall, in all probability, address an unwilling, a reasonably unwilling, audience, who will not fail to let us understand that they are weary of us and of our subject, and desire no more of it.

The skilful orator, therefore, will always keep his gaze keenly fixed upon the crisis of his discourse, and when that has been successfully secured, will conclude. Not unfrequently, of course, the development, or consummation, or, whatever we may please to call it, of this crisis, will constitute the principal and most important part of the conclusion itself.

But it may, naturally enough, be asked what is meant by the crisis of a discourse? The answer to this question

is contained in the very elementary idea of the nature and scope of a sermon, and flows from even the most cursory study of these points.

A sermon, as we have so often said, is, of its nature, a persuasive oration, and has for its object the persuading of a certain clearly defined body of men—to wit, our audience—to embrace, in certain plain and clearly defined circumstances, a certain clearly defined line of action. It is supposed that this line of action is one which our hearers, if left to themselves, are disinclined to adopt. At any rate, we take it for granted that it is one which it is our duty to impress upon them by every means in our power, in order that we may win their assent, an assent of intellect and of heart, to the views which we lay before them. For this end, we urge them in the strongest possible manner, and by every consideration which seems to us best suited to sway the understanding and the will. If we are successful in our efforts, a moment must necessarily arise in our discourse when it will be evident to us that our victory has been won, or is on the very point of being achieved, and only waits for the finishing stroke which is to crown the victorious assault. This is called the crisis of the discourse. It will naturally occur towards what should be the conclusion of the sermon. Not unfrequently, it is reserved for the very peroration or conclusion of the

address, and, as is evident, must have a very decided influence in securing success.

There is no part of a discourse which requires to be so skilfully managed, and so thoroughly studied, as the conclusion. This is the decisive moment. The victory is to be won now or never. It may be that our hearers still hang back. They cannot deny the force of our arguments, the strength of our reasoning, the validity of our consequences. But, for all that, they still hang back, unwilling to make the generous sacrifice which God demands at their hands; or, with hearts hardened and seared by long habits of indulgence and disregard of the voice of God, they shelter themselves behind a thousand petty subterfuges, and invent a thousand excuses, false and void of foundation though they be, why they should not listen to the voice of the Lord, or render obedience to the commands and prayers of His minister. It may be that the reason and intellect are convinced, and acknowledge the truth, but the will remains stubborn and unbending. Perhaps, nay, most likely, it wavers. It would fain bow before the voice of God, were it not for that other voice which raises itself in proud rebellion, a rebellion which, perchance, is all the more insidious and deadly because it is built upon the foundations of sensuality and pride. But, whatever the motive may be,

the unregenerate will hangs back, and the preacher feels that, unless it can be subdued, broken, discomfited, and routed utterly and entirely, all his labour will have been lost, all his arguments will have been thrown away, all the good seed which he has sown, with so much patient labour, and so much tearful hope, will have been choked and rendered fruitless by the thorns and briars amongst which it has fallen. He feels all this, keenly and intensely, as the man who is in earnest about his Master's business must ever feel these things; and he knows that the moment for the great assault has arrived. In these supreme moments, concentrating the sacred fire which burns so keenly within his breast, and which merely seeks some feeble expression in those ardent appeals, those brilliant turns of thought, those melting images, those torrents of hot and burning words which pour spontaneously from his lips, he throws himself with all his might upon the wavering but still stubborn foe. He rushes down upon him with all the highest, deepest efforts of his mind and heart, of his love and zeal, concentrated on this grand assault. He presses the reluctant but faltering will on every side. He leaves that will, and the irregular passions upon which it relies for its support, no loop-hole for escape. Urging, arguing, reasoning, pleading, praying, by every motive and by every power through which one man may act

upon another, he presses more and more keenly upon his foe, that thus, aided and strengthened by the assisttance of God's supporting grace, he may wring from every soul full and unconditional surrender to those arguments and those practical conclusions which he has laid before them; that thus, he may draw from penitent and broken hearts, those saving tears which are potent enough to wash the most deadly sins away; that thus, he may awaken those generous resolutions, and obtain those triumphs of conquering grace, which, like a true soldier of Christ, he ardently desires to lay at his Master's feet, as the pledges of his conflict, the trophies of his fight.

But, great as the importance of concluding well may be, many preachers seem to find it more difficult to do so than would at first sight appear likely. In fact, hard as they found it to make a good start and get fairly launched into their subject, they appear to find it harder still to wind up, and bring that subject to a close. And, in this case, we have the oratorical monster which is known by the unwieldy length of his tail. Captivated by the sound of his own voice; or, what is more likely, not exactly seeing how to conclude his discourse, the preacher continues to talk, although in reality he has already more than said all that he had to say on the subject. In these circumstances, his language, instead of rising in warmth, dignity, and real oratorical excellence,

is almost certain to degenerate into mere talk. The sermon is continued without any new light being thrown upon the matter—words are heaped up, but ideas are remarkable only by their absence—and the inevitable result is a lamentable weakening of the whole discourse, which, if it had been finished with prudence and discretion, might, perhaps, have been tolerably successful, but, as it is, only grows weaker and weaker the more it is prolonged. It may be, that, in a certain part of his discourse, in the crisis of his appeal to the feelings of his hearers, the preacher may have succeeded in moving them deeply, or in raising them to a momentary enthusiasm. But, having neglected to conclude when affairs were in this favourable position, his hearers, unable, or unwilling, to remain any longer with feelings unusually excited, or unduly strained, drop down at once to their ordinary level, and the preacher soon discovers that he is addressing, at the best a listless, in all probability, a wearied and disgusted audience. Still he flounders along for a little while longer, heaping word upon word, and phrase upon phrase, till, in the end, with the recklessness of despair, he winds up with the well-used text, "Come, ye blessed of my Father," and descends, crowned, if not with laurels, at least with the gratitude of his audience, for having seen fit to conclude at last.

Now, this is a position in which no preacher has a

right to place himself: the office which he fills, the duty which he discharges, the respect due to the body to which he belongs, and of which he is never free to forget that he is a member, require him to guard, as far as he may be able, against such a slovenly performance. And, as a rule, he will only guard effectually against this unbecoming and unpleasant result, by marking out clearly and distinctly in the plan of his discourse the leading ideas on which he will dwell in his conclusion, the manner in which he will develop them, and, to some extent, the very words in which he will give them expression. Nor will this be sufficient. He must also foresee how he will do this with that lucid brevity, that vigorous point, that warmth, earnest and real, just in proportion as it is brief, which alone render the conclusion of a discourse all that it ought to be, the most telling and effective portion of it.

There are various ways of concluding and winding up a discourse, and the preacher will, of course, avail himself of that method which may suit himself or his subject best.

The first, and undoubtedly the easiest, method of concluding, and it is one upon which the preacher can always fall back, no matter how embarrassed or hard pushed he may be, consists in a mere recapitulation of the leading heads, arguments, and illustrations con-

tained in the discourse. In a purely argumentative sermon, if we can conceive any circumstances in which it may be useful or desirable to deliver such a discourse, this form of conclusion is appropriate enough. In a sermon of this kind, the preacher appeals entirely to the intellect and the reason, and as there is no question of any address to the feelings, or of any attempt to move the heart and the will, a mere recapitulation of the arguments is all that is necessary by way of conclusion. Only, do not let the orator call such a performance a sermon. It may pass as a learned lecture, or as a philosophical essay, but, in no sense of the word, can it be considered as a persuasive oration. And it is a style of preaching which, we venture to think, a prudent priest will seldom employ.

What we have said of the purely argumentative discourse will, of course, apply in a great measure to the controversial sermon. As this kind of discourse, however, generally supposes the presence in the congregation of some who are outside the pale of the truth, there is more room in the conclusion for an appeal to the feelings and sentiments of the audience; since, if we take the trouble to proclaim the doctrines of the Church from a controversial point of view, it must surely be with the purpose of inducing those amongst our hearers, who may not be within the Fold, to embrace them.

Hence, a sermon of this nature will always conclude appropriately and well with a few words of warm and earnest exhortation, words full of charity towards those who may be wandering in the mazes of error and darkness, and of zeal for their speedy and thorough conversion.

Again, there are certain discourses, simple, familiar, unpremeditated, which are not really sermons, which contain no element of argument or intellectual discussion, which never approach the "crisis" of which we have spoken, except in so far as the entire discourse may be considered as dealing with the passions, feelings, and sentiments which it is the special object of the "crisis" to influence and move. Such are familiar instructions to children, exhortations before First Communion, addresses to Religious, etc. In these and like cases, although the speaker will naturally warm towards the end of his discourse, and although he may even recapitulate in one sense, still, as this will be merely a recapitulation of the feelings and sentiments to which he has already appealed, his conclusion will not be substantially different from the rest of his discourse, and can scarcely be called a formal peroration.

But, there is one method of concluding an ordinary discourse, and by an ordinary discourse we understand one that is partly argumentative and partly exhortatory,

which is practical, easy, and most appropriate; which it ought to give the speaker no great trouble to employ; and which, if it be discreetly used, will save him from all those inconvenient consequences at which we have already glanced.

This form or method of concluding will embrace, in a broad general way, two great leading parts or points, each one most practical, and each one most easy to seize. And these two great points are, first, a recapitulation and summary of the principal heads of the discourse; and, secondly, a few words of such warm, earnest, and zealous exhortation as may penetrate the most hidden recesses of every heart, may change every will, and render the triumph of grace signal and complete.

The first point, then, in a successful conclusion will be a brief recapitulation and summary of the most striking features of the discourse, and especially of those arguments, illustrations, etc., which we deem most conducive to persuasion, and best adapted to pave the way for that *grand coup*, for that last final assault, which we are presently to make upon the feelings of our hearers, in order to carry all before us, in order to soften every heart, to bow every head, and bend every stubborn knee before the sweet yoke of Jesus Christ. The preacher, therefore, having disposed of the instructive, argumen-

tative, and illustrative parts of his discourse, sees that the time has come to wind up, and bring that discourse to a happy conclusion. Hence, he proceeds to recall as much of his discourse as can be recalled in a few short sentences, because he feels instinctively that by presenting his arguments, etc., in one serried, compact body, they will naturally produce a greater impression upon the mind and heart, and gain a more complete victory over his hearers, than they have yet done, brought forward as they have been without that strength and vigour which they will acquire from mutual support. But, as the argumentation has been already concluded, and we must neither venture to return upon it ourselves in any substantial measure or degree, nor allow our hearers to perceive, in so far as this may be practicable, that we are merely recapitulating, this recapitulation must be extremely brief, rapid, and, as we have just said, as imperceptible as possible to the audience. Our object here is not to return to the consideration of any special portion of our discourse, but to renew the impression of the whole; and to do this in such a manner as to interest, to move, to persuade our hearers, or, at least, to dispose and prepare them to be persuaded; and nothing would be more fatal to our object than the idea that the preacher was preparing to reconduct his audience over the ground which they had already

travelled with so much patient labour, and so much ready and diligent attention.

Having thus briefly recapitulated the leading heads of his discourse, and having done this with such energy and warmth, with such an absence of anything like formal or premeditated recapitulation, as to make it appear as if in reality he were appealing to the passions rather than to the reason, he passes on to the second part of his conclusion, which, in truth, constitutes the peroration strictly so called, and upon his skilful or unskilful management of which so much of his success will depend.

This element of his peroration, or conclusion, consists in a few words, or, at most, in a few sentences, of earnest, burning, truly zealous exhortation. Although brief, but warm, exhortation may have had its place in other parts of his sermon, and notably at the conclusion of each leading point, it is now that what we have called the crisis of the discourse will, as a general rule, occur. This is the moment in which the preacher is to bear down, with all his forces, upon the already wavering, or yet stubborn will. This is the moment in which, expressing in burning, but in plain and simple words, those practical conclusions, and those fervent resolutions regarding a more holy and Christian mode of life, which must be the natural fruit of every really

successful discourse, he must carry, not only conviction to every mind, but persuasion to every heart. Now is the time in which the appeal to the passions, *par excellence,* will have full play. Now is the moment in which the speaker will prove how much or how little of the true fire burns within his heart. Now is the time for the sparkling eye, the ringing voice, the impassioned gesture of his hand, to make themselves known and felt. Now, or never, is he to stand before his audience in the fullest, truest, deepest sense of the word, their master and their lord; their master in the light of the truth, and their lord in the strength of the Gospel of Christ. Now every intellect must bow, now every heart must melt, beneath the irresistible influence of his words; of those words which are irresistible because they are the words of a man who, although he may not be very learned, nor very deeply skilled in worldly things, speaks with the accent of one who believes what he proclaims, who practises what he preaches, whose soul is all on fire with ardent love for the welfare of his flock, with unquenchable zeal for the greater glory of Jesus Christ: the words of a man who never wearies of proclaiming to the world, to the willing and to the unwilling, to the just and to the unjust, to the sinner and to the saint, the rights, the prerogatives, and the attributes of his master, Jesus Christ—

of Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. Now, in one word, is the moment in which the heart of the true orator answers with keen instinct, and ready impulse, to the demands which are made upon it; now is the moment in which the true orator will rise to the full dignity of his position as minister of Christ, as guide and teacher of his fellow-men; and now is the moment in which, having won his victory and carried his point, the man who is wise with the priceless wisdom of experience, will know how to conclude his discourse, how to descend from the sacred chair, whilst the success of his appeal is at its very height, whilst the power of his language, and the force of his words, is as yet unquestioned and unimpaired.

It may be said that the picture we have drawn of the orator, and of his success, is too much of a fancy one; or, at all events, that it is one which is rarely realized. ~~Perhaps~~ so! But we venture to think that it is a true one, nevertheless, and that it is just in proportion as a man can succeed in realizing it that he will succeed in realizing the dignity of his position, and the solid triumphs which await him, and which are his legitimate rights, as a minister of God, and as a preacher of that Gospel which is living and efficacious, which penetrates the soul, and is keener, in the mouth of him who knows how to use it, than a two-edged sword.

It is needless to repeat that the peroration, or conclusion, is the portion of a discourse in which, above all others, the appeal to the passions has its proper place. Nor, having treated at great length in "Sacred Eloquence"* of the nature of these appeals, and the manner in which they are to be conducted, need we now delay longer upon this matter. It will suffice to remind the young preacher, that the peroration of his discourse will, if it is to be successful, necessarily be brief, since all appeals to the passions are incapable of being unduly prolonged: that in these last moments, when the will is finally to be gained, all must be strong, vigorous, passionate, warm from the heart: that, in one word, this is the crowning portion of his address for which he must reserve all that is most true, most ardent, and most precious, in reason, heart, and tongue. "*Quæ excellant, serventur ad perorandum.*" . . . "*Hic, si unquam, totos eloquentiæ fontes aperire licet.*"

After these preliminary remarks on the nature, object, and best method of concluding a discourse, we cannot, probably, bring this chapter to a close in a more useful manner, than by selecting a few examples of perorations employed by well-known writers, which the young preacher may study at his leisure.

* "Sacred Eloquence," chap. 9, sec. i. ii. iii. iv. v.

Our first example is taken from St. Liguori's "Sermons for all the Sundays of the year."* These discourses are remarkable for their solidity of matter, and aim much more at suggesting substantial and leading ideas, than at eloquence of language or elaboration of detail. In the sermon at present under notice, the preacher has been considering the various circumstances of soul and body which ordinarily accompany the death of men of the world, and he concludes in the following simple, but striking words, which, as is evident, contain a *resumé* of the whole matter:—

"Before the body is cold, he is covered with a worn-out garment; because it must soon rot with him in the grave. Two lighted candles are placed in the chamber; the curtain of the bed on which the dead man lies is let down; and he is left alone. The parish priest is sent for, and requested to come in the morning and take away the corpse. The priest comes; the deceased is carried to the church; and this is his last journey on this earth. The priests begin to sing the '*De profundis clamavi ad te, Domine,*' etc. The spectators, who look at the funeral as it passes, speak of the deceased. One says: *He was a proud man.* Another: *O that he*

* James Duffy, Sons, and Co., Dublin.

had died ten years ago. A third: *He was fortunate in the world; he made a great deal of money; he had a fine house; but now he takes nothing with him.* And while they speak of him in this manner, he is burning in Hell. His body He arrives at the church, and is placed in the middle, surrounded by six candles. The bystanders look at him, but suddenly turn away their eyes, because his appearance excites horror. The Mass is sung for his repose, and after Mass, the '*Libera;*' and the function is concluded with these words: *Requiescat in pace*—May he rest in peace. May he rest in peace, if he died in peace with God; but if he has died in enmity with God, what peace! what peace can he enjoy? He shall have no peace as long as God shall be God. The 10/13/26 sepulchre is then opened; the corpse is thrown into it; the grave is covered with a tombstone; and he is left there to rot, and to be the food of worms. It is thus that the scene of this world ends for each of us. His relatives put on mourning; but they first divide among themselves the property which he has left. They shed an occasional tear for two or three days, and afterwards forget him. And what shall become of him? If he be saved, he shall be happy for ever; if damned, he must be miserable for eternity."

how TRUE TO LIFE!

Our next extract is from Massillon, the great French

preacher. Massillon is a writer who, we venture to think, will be more admired the more he is studied. It has been said of his eloquence, that it goes right to the soul: it agitates without confounding, appals without crushing, penetrates without lacerating. His diction, which is always easy, elegant, and pure, never deviates from that simplicity which alone is reconcilable with good taste; while for clearness of reasoning, power of illustration, and order of arrangement, he stands almost unrivalled; and the young preacher, exercising, of course, due discretion as to the sermons he selects, and the manner in which he employs them, could scarcely, *omnibus pensatis*, take a better model. In the course of this work, chap. 13, we have alluded to Massillon's discourse on "the Happiness of the Just," and the manner in which he treats his subject. He concludes his sermon with the following beautiful words, which are at once a *resumé* and an exhortation:—

"Would you then, my dear hearer, live happy on the earth? Live Christianly. Piety is universally beneficial. Innocence of heart is the source of true pleasures. Turn to every side; there is no rest, says the Spirit of God, for the wicked. Try every pleasure; they will never eradicate that disease of the mind, that fund of lassitude and gloom, which, go where you will, continually accom-

panies you. Cease, then, to consider the lot of the godly as a disagreeable and sorrowful lot; judge not their happiness from appearances which deceive you. You see their countenance bedewed with tears, but you see not the invisible hand which wipes them away; you see their body groaning under the yoke of penitence, but you see not the unction of grace which softens it; you see sorrowful and austere manners, but you see not a conscience always cheerful and tranquil. They are like the ark in the desert: it appeared covered only with the skins of animals: the exterior is mean or unattractive; it is the condition of that melancholy desert. But, could you penetrate into the heart, into that divine sanctuary, what new wonders would rise to your eyes! You would find it clothed in pure gold: you would there see the glory of God with which it is filled: you would there admire the fragrance of the perfumes, and the fervour of the prayers which are continually mounting upwards to the Lord; the sacred fire which is never extinguished on the altar; that silence, that peace, that majesty which reigns there; and the Lord himself, who hath chosen it for his abode, and who hath delighted in it."

We have already given the reader some idea of the wonderfully vigorous language in which Father Segneri

was accustomed to introduce and to develop the subjects on which he spoke. Let us now call his attention to the following beautifully pathetic, but strong and vigorous passage, from the peroration of Segneri's sermon "On the Sinner's Quiet Conscience:"—

"But why speak of evil spirits? Christ Himself will be at hand to upbraid you with His own mouth for all the ingratitude you have heaped on His Blood. And what confidence will you then repose in one, who has taken care to set down, in minute detail, even 'every idle word' you have spoken, not to mention your slanders, your blasphemies, your falsehoods? I fancy I behold Him, how He will appear before you at your last struggle—naked, wounded, gory, and besmeared with blood. On His right side and on His left are His ministering angels, armed with storm and terror, while, bearing in His hand the ponderous register of all human delinquencies, He will begin reading over yours in regular succession, sounding aloud, as He proceeds, in the ears of your conscience, now no longer sealed in deafness, those fearful words in the Psalm: *These things thou hast done, and I kept silence* (xlix. 21). 'Thou, from thy childhood to thy youth, and from thy youth to thy riper years, hast committed all manner of evil against Me—*and I kept silence;* in all thy past life,

thou hast rejected and despised everything that I commanded thee, as being good for thy soul and conducive to My honour and glory—*and I kept silence;* thou hast gone on rioting and revelling in thine own way, after the wickedness of thine heart and the course of this world—*and I kept silence;* even to thine old age, thou hast obstinately persisted in thy vicious habits, and gone on adding sin to sin—*and I kept silence.* And didst thou then indulge the thought—didst thou *think wickedly, that I was such a one as thyself?* Didst thou think, that I should always *keep silence*—that I should never be roused to resentment? *I have long time holden My peace; I have been still and refrained myself; but now I will cry like a travailing woman* (Isa. xxii. 14). And, forasmuch as during all thy life thou didst never prize My Blood, but didst shamefully trample it under foot, as the dung of the earth, behold, this same Blood, which would have been thy redemption, is turned to thy condemnation!"—*On the Sinner's Quiet Conscience.*

In the way of *resumé*, at once historical and pathetic, expressed in graceful language, and with a depth of genuine but truly dignified feeling, nothing more striking could easily be found than the peroration to the Archbishop of Westminster's funeral oration on

Cardinal Wiseman. To appreciate fully the significance and meaning of these beautiful words, we must call to mind the intimate relations which existed between these two illustrious men, and the wonderful part which, in the providence of God, they were called, each one in his own time, to take, in watching the early promise, in fostering and protecting the first fair fruits of that Second Spring of the English Church, which already gives such hopeful presage of maturity and strength. The archbishop thus concludes his oration :—

"Great and noble in his life, he was greater and nobler in his death. There were about it a calmness, a recollection, a majesty, an order of perfect fitness and preparation worthy of the chamber of death, and such as became the last hours of a Pastor and Prince of the Church of God. He was a great Christian in all the deepest, largest, simplest, meaning of the name; and a great Priest in thought, word, and deed, in the whole career of his life and in the mould of his whole being. He died the death of the just, making a worthy and proportionate end to a course so great.

"We have lost a Friend, a Father, and a Pastor, whose memory will be with us while life lasts. As one who knew him well, said well of him, 'We are all lowered by his loss.' We have all lost somewhat which was our

support, our strength, our guidance, our pattern, and our pride. We have lost him who, in the face of this great people, worthily represented the greatness and the majesty of the Universal Church. He has fallen asleep in the midst of the generous, kindly, just, noble-hearted sympathy of the people, the public men, the public voices of England; a great people, strong and bold in its warfare, but humane, chivalrous, and Christian to the antagonists who are worthy to contend with it. He is gone, but he has left behind him in our memories a long line of historical pictures, traced in the light of other days upon a field which will retain its colours fresh and vivid for ever. Some of you remember him as the companion of your boyhood, upon the bare hills of Durham; some in the early morning of his life, in the sanctuaries of Rome; some see before them now his slender, stooping form, on a bright winter's day, walking to the Festival of St. Agnes, out of the walls; some again, drawn up to the full stature of his manhood, rising above the storm, and contending with the calm, commanding voice of reason against the momentary excitement of the people of England. Some again can see him vested and arrayed as a Prince of the Church with the twelve Suffragans of England closing the long procession which opened the first Provincial Synod of Westminster, after the silence of three hundred years. Some will

picture him in the great hall of a Roman palace, surrounded by half the Bishops of the world, of every language and of every land, chosen by them as their chief, to fashion their words in declaring to the Sovereign Pontiff their filial obedience to the Spiritual and Temporal power with which God has invested the Vicar of His Son. Some will see him feeble in death, but strong in faith, arrayed as a Pontiff, surrounded by the Chapter of his Church, by word and deed verifying the Apostle's testimony, 'I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith;' and some will cherish above all these visions of greatness and of glory, the calm, sweet countenance of their best, fastest friend and father, lying in the dim light of his chamber, not of death, but of transit to his crown. These things are visions, but they are substance. 'Transit gloria mundi' as the flax burns in fire. But these things shall not pass away. Bear him forth, Right Reverend Fathers and dear brethren in Jesus Christ—bear him forth to the green burial-ground on the outskirts of this busy wilderness of men. It was his desire to die and to be buried, not amid the glories of Rome, but in the midst of his flock, the first Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster. Lay him in the midst of that earth, as a shepherd in the midst of his sheep, near to the Holy Cross, the symbol of his life, work, and hope; where the

Pastors he has ordained will be buried one by one in a circle round about him in death, as they laboured round about him in life. He will be in the midst of us still—his name, his form, his words, his patience, his love of souls—to be our law, our rebuke, our consolation. And yet, not so: it is but the body of this death which you bear forth with tears of loving veneration. He is not here. He will not be there. He is already where the Great Shepherd of the sheep is numbering His elect, and those who led them to the Fold of Eternal Life. And the hands which have so often blessed you, which anointed you, which fed you with the Bread of Life, are already lifted up in prayer, which never ceases day nor night for you, one by one, for England, for the Church in all the world."

Finally, in the conclusion to Dr. Newman's magnificent sermon on "The Neglect of Divine Calls and Warnings,"* the young preacher will discover at a glance the various points which we have mentioned as specially characteristic of a good peroration. Nothing could be more simple, more plainly to the point, and yet more full of tender love and charity, than the recapitulation of the leading ideas which have been treated in the discourse, whilst the concluding lines breathe a

* "Discourses addressed to Mixed Congregations."

fragrant beauty, and a touching pathos, which seem to us as near perfection as they well can be:—

"Vanity of vanities! misery of miseries! they will not attend to us, they will not believe us. We are but a few in number, and they are many; and the many will not give credit to the few. O misery of miseries! Thousands are dying daily; they are waking up into God's everlasting wrath; they look back on the days of the flesh, and call them few and evil; they despise and scorn the very reasonings which then they trusted and which have been disproved by the event; they curse the recklessness which made them put off repentance; they have fallen under His justice, whose mercy they presumed upon; and their companions and friends are going on as they did, and are soon to join them. As the last generation presumed, so does the present. The father would not believe God could punish, and now the son will not believe; the father was indignant when eternal pain was spoken of, and the son gnashes his teeth, and smiles contemptuously. The world spoke well of itself thirty years ago, and so will it thirty years to come. And thus it is that this vast flood of life is carried on from age to age; myriads trifling with God's love, tempting His justice, and, like the herd of swine, falling headlong down the steep! O

mighty God! O God of love! it is too much! it broke the heart of thy sweet Son Jesus to see the misery of man spread out before His eyes. He died by it as well as for it. And we too, in our measure, our eyes ache, and our hearts sicken, and our heads reel, when we but feebly contemplate it. O most tender heart of Jesus, why wilt Thou not end, when wilt Thou end, this ever-growing load of sin and woe? When wilt Thou chase away the devil into his own hell, and close the pit's mouth, that Thy chosen may rejoice in Thee, quitting the thought of those who perish in their wilfulness? But, oh! by those five dear Wounds in Hands, and Feet, and Side—perpetual founts of mercy, from which the fulness of the Eternal Trinity flows ever fresh, ever powerful, ever bountiful to all who seek Thee—if the world must still endure, at least gather Thou a larger and a larger harvest, an ampler proportion of souls out of it into Thy garner, that these latter times may, in sanctity, and glory, and the triumphs of Thy grace, exceed the former.

"'*Deus misereatur nostri, et benedicat nobis;*' God, have mercy on us, and bless us; and show the light of His countenance upon us, and have mercy on us; that we may know Thy way upon earth, Thy salvation among all the nations. Let the people praise Thee, O God; let all the people praise Thee. Let the

nations be glad, and leap for joy; because Thou dost judge the people in equity, and dost direct the nations on the earth. God, even our God, bless us, God bless us; and let all the ends of the earth fear Him.'"

We offer no apology for the length of these extracts. They surely speak for themselves. If he study them in the light of the principles which we have ventured to suggest and throw out, we hope, as we believe, that they will be of great service to the young preacher.

CHAPTER XVIII.

STYLE OF THE PULPIT—STYLE OF THE PULPIT IS ESSENTIALLY POPULAR—CHARACTERISTICS OF A POPULAR STYLE, IN THE TRUE ACCEPTATION OF THE TERM.

THE young preacher having now accompanied us through the various stages which are involved in the preparation and delivery of an extemporary discourse, we cannot, perhaps, conclude these remarks in a manner at once more useful and more acceptable to him, than by a few words on the Style of the Pulpit, more especially in its relation to extemporary preaching.

Premising that we speak of style in the broadest and widest acceptation of the term—taking it for granted that, whilst the sacred orator must, according to the exigencies of varying circumstances, be prepared, on some occasions, to rise to the highest flights of eloquence of which he may be capable, just as he must, more frequently, be ready to accommodate himself to the humble capacity of the simple and the unlearned—we may

fairly ask whether there is any one quality of oratory which can be assigned as the special characteristic of Popular Pulpit Eloquence.

There are, undoubtedly, certain solemn occasions on which the people are prepared to hear sublime and elevated subjects treated in the most finished manner, adorned and enriched with all the dignity and grace which can be imparted to them by profundity of conception, and by polished and eloquent language—in a word, by all the ornaments of style, and all the graces of a finished and vigorous elocution. But, it is evident that these efforts must be very exceptional, and that the qualities which render such discourses perfect in their way, can never constitute the characteristics of the more ordinary and every-day style of preaching. For, as we have already said, the very first condition of public speaking is to be intelligible. But, as the majority of those whom the preacher will, in all ordinary circumstances, be called upon to address, will be composed of the simple, the ignorant, and the unlettered, it is plain, that if he is to be intelligible to them, he cannot speak in high-flown language, or in profundity of thought. And, when to this we add that ignorance on matters of religion and duty is not confined to the poor and the unlettered, but that it is not unfrequently to be met with amongst those who occupy a respectable

position in society, and who are well instructed in mere worldly affairs, is it not evident that the language of the preacher who is to address such audiences as these with fruit and success, must be of a very different character from that of which we have spoken above? The people themselves are the very first to understand this. They may listen with pleasure, from time to time, to a display of finished oratory, in which, may be, the passing triumph which is reaped by the speaker is much greater than the solid profit which is derived by the listener; but the good sense and the faith of a religious people are strong enough to cause them to understand, that the true preacher, the true minister of the Gospel of Christ, should ambition far different triumphs than these. They may listen, as we have just said, to the great orator from time to time, but, as a matter of fact, they take but little interest in his polished language and his glowing style, and are quick to pass judgment on a discourse which seems to them, rightly or wrongly, to savour much of vanity and self-seeking, little of zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. The preacher whom they love, respect, and revere—to whom they listen with pleasure, and from whom they part with regret—is the man who speaks to them from a heart that is all on fire with charity and love; who speaks the plain, simple truth in plain and simple

words; who is vastly more anxious to soften their hearts, and to cause the saving tears of penance to flow down their cheeks, than to win their approbation and their empty praise. This is the man whom they love, around whom they are anxious to press; this is the man who, whilst he enlightens and instructs, moves and softens every heart. This is the man who conquers without seeming to fight, who secures the deepest and most lasting results without apparent labour or effort. This is the man whose style of preaching exemplifies, in the most striking manner, the quality which may be fairly and justly assigned as the special characteristic of pulpit oratory, and more especially of Extemporary Preaching. This is the man whose style of preaching is essentially and characteristically *popular*.

The style of the pulpit is essentially a popular style; not a popular style in the false and misused meaning of the word, as signifying empty appeals to passion, prejudice, or mere passing sentiment and feeling; but in the true and only reasonable acceptation of the term, that acceptation in which Cicero describes popular speech to be that which is eminently becoming—*Quod decet*. And from all that we have said above, as well as through the entire course of this treatise, we venture to hope we have made it sufficiently plain, that the only style of speaking which truly becomes the Chris-

tian orator is that in which, discarding all subtle reasoning and all abstract and unpractical forms of thought, all laboured composition and all unnecessary or undue elaboration of his language and his mode of speech, the preacher strives, by the simplicity, the purity, the clearness, the gravity, the variety, and, above all, by the earnestness of his style, to render his discourse duly interesting and solidly useful to his hearers. This is the style which is truly becoming in the priest of God —*Quod decet.* This is the special characteristic of popular preaching.

Yes: the style of the pulpit is essentially popular. This we have already shown. And the special characteristics of really popular speech are simplicity, purity, clearness, gravity, interest, and earnest warmth. On these qualities we now purpose to say a few words.

A popular sermon will be essentially simple. Without aiming at high-flown language, or without descending to what is low or mean, it will express plain thoughts in plain words. And simplicity of speech possesses this great advantage to commence with: whilst it can easily be made to please all men, it is certain to benefit all. Moreover, unless spoken language possess this quality, it will fail, at least so far as regards the majority of hearers, in the very first essential of speech. For it is not enough, where others are

concerned, that our words be in harmony with, and express, our ideas: they must be rigorously adapted to the capacity and intelligence of our hearers. But, it is quite certain, that, so far as the masses are concerned, all abstract ideas, all ingenious reflections, all learned discussions, are totally out of place. If we would speak to the hearts of the people we must speak simply, and be content to express simple thoughts in simple words. We must try, in one sense, to descend to their level, to see things as they see them, and to feel them as they feel them. And hence it is, that really popular preachers have always been so much addicted to the use of metaphors, comparisons, etc. When these comparisons are drawn from actual, present, or visible things, they have a wonderful influence, more especially if they be striking and popular, in assisting the people to comprehend and appreciate what we say. This is the way in which our Divine Lord taught the people. Although He possessed all the treasures of the Divine Science—although He was the very source and fountain of Infinite Wisdom itself—we shall probably be surprised, on looking through the Scriptures, to find how seldom He argued or reasoned, and how frequently He instructed and taught. In this, as in all things else, He is the model and the exemplar of the priest.

If our spoken language, if our speech, be simple, it

must, almost as a necessary consequence, be clear. Indeed, Gaichiés does not hesitate to assert that clearness is the first quality, and most essential condition, of popular speaking. All the rest, he says, purity, dignity, polish, must give place to clearness; since it is of much less consequence to be criticised by the grammarians than misunderstood by the people. Nor is it so easy to be clear as may appear at first sight. For, as the clearness at which we are obliged to aim, is a relative, and not an absolute clearness, it must necessarily be the fruit of much careful study of our subject and our audience. In fact, it may be doubted whether any part of his preparation requires to be undertaken with greater care, and worked out with more thorough and discriminating perseverance, than his study *how to be understood.* If he doubt this, let the young preacher reflect for a moment on the great number of those who, in their public discourses, sacred or otherwise, fail to convey their meaning and make themselves intelligible, and this not merely to the ignorant and uneducated, but to the intelligent portion of their audience. We shall be very fortunate if, after long practice, and much studious reflection, we succeed in acquiring the priceless quality of clearness. What aids us to be simple will, at the same time, aid us to be clear. If we accustom ourselves to speak in a natural manner, without

pomposity or empty affectation; if by study, thought, and prayer, we fill ourselves with our subject, and then, without undue solicitude or over-anxious care, allow ourselves, when the time has come, to speak from the abundance of the heart, we shall speak simply and clearly, and, as a necessary consequence, well. "*In omnibus sermonibus suis*," says St. Augustine, in his instructions to preachers, "*primitus et maxime, ut intelligantur, elaborent, ea quantum possunt perspicuitate dicendi, ut aut multum tardus sit, qui non intelligat, aut in rerum, quas explicare aut ostendere volumus, difficultate ac subtilitate, non in nostra locutione sit causa, quo minus tardiusve quod dicimus, possit intelligi.*"*

Popular eloquence most assuredly must be clear and simple; but it by no means follows from this, as some seem to imagine, that it need be low or vulgar. Young writers and speakers are very slow to learn the great truth that, so far from clearness and simplicity being incompatible with perfect purity of style and of composition, they constitute, on the contrary, its finishing and crowning grace. Whilst, therefore, the sacred orator will not much concern himself about any great elaboration of his style, any over-careful trimming of his sen-

* De Doctr. Christ., lib. iv. cap. 8.

tences, or any undue affectation of elegance, either in composition or in utterance, he will ever take care to speak as becomes a scholar and a Christian gentleman; and let him be quite certain that if, under a mistaken idea of rendering himself more acceptable or more intelligible to them, he descends to their level, and forgets the dignity of the pulpit by the use of coarse, unpolished, and unbecoming language, the people will be the first to take offence at this, and to resent the liberty which such a speaker takes with their understanding and good taste. They expect a preacher to speak to them simply, and in intelligible language, but they expect him, at the same time, to remember the position which he occupies. They will strive their utmost to rise to his level, at least so far as to be able to comprehend his meaning, but they do not wish him to descend to theirs. The prudent preacher will never lose sight of this. At the same time, let him not alarm himself needlessly lest he be not understood. If he preach in plain, simple, grammatical English, his audience will understand the meaning of what he says, since they comprehend much more readily than they speak.

Popular pulpit eloquence will be grave, and, although this may perhaps sound like a contradiction in terms, it will be lively and full of interest. There are some things which a priest can never, in any circumstances,

afford to forget; and foremost amongst them is the gravity of the sacerdotal character. We have already said that the priest can never descend to become a mere mob orator, any more than he can become a mere buffoon. At all times, and in all places, he must express himself with that gravity of manner and of speech which alone become the minister of God, the teacher of the Gospel of Christ. And this is a point upon which, most surely, we need not delay in this place. But, having premised this, let us add, that, whilst he never loses sight of the gravity and innate dignity of the sacerdotal character, he must, if he is to be a successful speaker, labour with all his might and main to render his discourse really, truly, and solidly interesting.

It is very surprising how many zealous, earnest, thoroughly pious men fail, utterly and completely, as preachers, simply because they are unable to infuse one shred of human interest into what they say. The moment they enter the pulpit their very nature seems to have undergone a change; and many a man who, in his daily intercourse with his people, is frank, easy, and affectionate, becomes cold, stiff, and stilted, when he begins to speak to them in public. His language is as devoid of interest as the tones of his voice are of sympathy, and the souls of his hearers, instead of dilating under the power of his words, instead of expanding

to the vivifying influences of the life and the grace that should have come to them through the ministry of his tongue, shrivel and contract under the withering spell of a voice that is without music or warmth, and of a speech that is without animation, interest, or life. It is all very well to say that the people ought to be content with plain, solid instruction. So they ought. But, as a matter of fact, they are not. If we would benefit the people, practically and in earnest, we must begin by taking them as they are, and not as they ought to be; whereas, as a rule, we do the very contrary. We give them credit for qualities which they do not possess; we commence by assuming that they are everything which they are not; and, in consequence, we never succeed in making them what they ought to be, simply because we never realize what they are. It may be very unreasonable in our people to require us to render our discourses interesting, but most undoubtedly they do require it, as one of the essential conditions on which they will consent to bestow their attention upon us; and hence, unless we know how to do this, we may give up all hope of being of any real service to them. The successful orator is a man who is quick to perceive this—a man who knows how to measure the need, and to apply the remedy. Here the power of word-painting has full play. Here the skilful

preacher avails himself of all the resources which nature and art place at his disposal to aid him in amusing, pleasing, and interesting his hearers. He constantly varies his forms of expression, and the words which he employs. He illustrates by examples, he explains by comparisons, he gives human interest and sympathy to his speech by the judicious employment of parables. He remembers that his Divine Lord and Master was never weary of teaching by parable, and of illustrating by example, and he aims at no higher model. He speaks to his people in this, the language of nature, and he is rewarded by the sparkling eye, the eager face, the upturned head, which tell of an attentive, because an interested, audience. He puts matters before them in a homely form and shape, and in a shape which they can recognise as something familiar and well-known. It is Fenelon who remarks that, since the fall, man is absorbed in sensible* and material things—he cannot follow abstract ideas, he cannot realise abstract conceptions, he cannot separate, at least for long, mind and matter. Here is another of his evils. But we must take him as he is, and do our best to bring truth home

* The word "sensible" is employed here in its scholastic and theological meaning. I do not know any English word which expresses the idea to be conveyed so closely and precisely.—T. J. P.

to his understanding, by clothing it in suitable terms, in language which he comprehends, and which possesses an interest for him. The popular orator does this. He has taken the Sacred Scriptures as his guide, and in them he has learned how to give form and colour, human if you will, to his conceptions and his thoughts; and there, too, he has learned how to combine simplicity with purity, gravity with warmth, and interest with dignity, of speech. Although his style may be simple and grave, it is not therefore monotonous or dull. On the contrary, it is full of light and colour. That colour may not be of the brightest and the most gaudy hue, a crimson or a royal purple, but it will be no less striking and real on that account—for the colours which nature seems to love the best are those more modest tints, the perfection of whose beauty is found, not in violence of contrast, but in due subordination of shade to shade, and of leaf to leaf, in the perfect blending of the varied painted parts, to form the one matchless whole. To such speech as this—simple, gracious, picturesque, full of interest and animation, but never turgid, never bombastic, never scattering as flowers what turn out to be weeds, never seeking to feed hungry men with the froth of empty declamation and of soulless words—the people dearly love to listen, so long as the speaker keeps himself within the range

of their capacity, and applies himself to their wants and their woes, to their griefs and their cares.

But, above and before all things else, popular speech must be characterised by thorough earnestness—by earnestness of thought, by earnestness of composition, by earnestness of delivery; by that earnestness which is at once the witness and the exponent of strong convictions and of ardent feelings. The sacred orator who is not in earnest is nothing. If he be not in earnest, if he be not all ablaze with the sacred fire, if his own soul do not thrill under the sacred influences which he undertakes to urge upon others, he must necessarily be nothing. As an accomplished writer* has said so well, nothing can supply, even for elocutionary purposes, the want of a living faith, and a personal interest in the solemn and glorious truth we have to declare, or the want of a deep and heart-piercing conviction that the salvation of those to whom we speak depends upon their believing it.

Yes—the popular preacher must be thoroughly in earnest. It is one of the conditions of success which nature herself has laid down; and he must be content to abide by the general law. If he be incapable, not

* "Elocution: the sources and elements of its power." By J. H. M'Ilvaine. New York: Charles Scribner and Company. 1871.

only of appreciating, but of feeling, the true, the beautiful, and the sublime; if he have no interest—we only put a hypothetical case, for such an assertion could surely never be true of a minister of the Gospel of Christ—if he have no interest in the truth he preaches; if his heart never grow hot within his breast as he ponders over the Master's words which he has been appointed to proclaim to a soul-starved, to a hungry and an eager people; if it be all the same to him whether he have to speak of the terrors of the Dreadful Day to come, of the mercy of his God, or of the most simple and fundamental of the Christian truths; if his soul warm no more under the influence of the one than when he merely explains the other; in a word, if no sentiment, no matter how sublime—if no position of affairs, no matter how momentous—if no need, no matter how urgent and pressing, of his neighbour's panting, struggling, well-nigh shipwrecked, soul—if none of these, or of a thousand kindred motives which press from time to time upon his notice, be potent enough to disturb the even tenor of his way, to rouse him to a momentary enthusiasm and warmth—it is, no doubt, a matter to be deplored, but it is one for which we have no remedy to prescribe. It becomes a very plain and simple matter of fact—the conditions of success are not present, the foundation of anything in the

shape of oratorical excellence is wanting, and, so far as we are concerned, there would seem to be an end of the matter.

But, in all sad, sober earnestness, why should such things be? Considering the dignity of the office we discharge and the momentous interests which are at stake, why are we not in earnest when we speak from the pulpit? Or, to state the case more truly, why cannot we make men perceive that we are in earnest—as, no doubt, the great majority of Christian preachers really are, although you could never gather it from their accent, the nature of their language, or the manner of their delivery. It is not enough for us to be ourselves persuaded of the authority we possess, of the power which we wield in the Divine Word. The Abbé Mullois, who says all things well, says most truly, that we must make our hearers feel that we are so endowed. They must feel, while listening to us, that, verily and indeed, we speak in God's name; that we have not come before them to tickle their ears with empty words, or to amuse them with the far-fetched speculations with which we have amused our own leisure hours in the silence of our study; but that we have come to proclaim to them those same solemn and momentous truths before which we ourselves, first of all, have humbled ourselves to the very dust: those self-

same truths, the contemplation of which has filled our own souls with deepest reverence and profoundest dread.

See, how earnestly men of the world speak when they are engaged in discussing any matter in which they take a lively interest! Listen to the debates in their parliaments, their corporations, and their social gatherings. Nay, how warm we grow ourselves, from time to time, in discussing matters which, perhaps, are of no importance, which have no reference to God or our neighbour's soul! We have more than enough of energy and animation then; it is for the pulpit that we keep our coldness and reserve.

Surely we, we preachers of the Gospel, are not less in earnest than the men of the world. Why, then, do we not speak out as they do? We cannot deny them that justice. What they think, they say; and what they say, they say as if they believed it. They speak with the accent of conviction, and, speaking thus, they speak with a power that is irresistible. It is not enough for us to believe. We must make known the truth which we hold, we must declare the Faith which is in us. But it is not enough to do this in any kind of a way. We must proclaim it as if we believed it; we must proclaim it as if we gloried in it; as if the one object, nearest and dearest to our very heart of hearts, were to

make it known to all the world, to bring it home to every soul that has been redeemed by the Saviour's precious blood. What comparison can there ever be between those trivial matters about which men of the world become so wonderfully earnest, and those tremendous interests which have been committed to our keeping? None—surely none. When, therefore, duty calls us to speak of these things, we must do it as men who are thoroughly in earnest—we must speak with those accents of conviction which thrill an earnest man to his very finger's ends; and if we speak thus, we shall speak with complete and unequivocal success. It has been well said of such a speaker that he astounds, staggers, and overcomes the gainsayers. And it is true. We have all seen it, at least now and again. We have all witnessed, at least sometimes in our lives, the wonderful results that have been produced by an earnest man speaking in the language and accent of conviction. A few words uttered in this manner often produce more effect than the laboured sermons of other men; since this is the very thing we want, the very quality for which, perhaps without clearly knowing what it is we miss in them, we pine so ardently in our preachers. We have no lack of eloquence, as things go; close reasoners and clever controversialists are not wanting to our pulpits; but when, once in an age, a thoroughly

earnest man appears—a man not only earnest in heart and soul, but in word and in tongue—a man who is not afraid to speak out the truth that is in him—to speak it as he feels it, without fear of persons, without favour or disguise—he is the man to carry all before him, he is the man to speak victories, as Holy Scripture puts it; and this for the simple reason that, speaking as he does, with the language of faith and of love, his hearers are as quick to submit to one in whose ministry they recognise the hand of the Lord, as they are slow to oppose, even in thought, the influence of him who seems to them to speak with the voice of that God against whom no man may hope to prevail.

Besides, it is one of the special and characteristic advantages of extemporary preaching, that it is peculiarly adapted for the display of earnestness and warmth. Mr. M'Ilvaine, in his excellent Treatise on Elocution, a work which we cordially recommend to the notice of the young preacher, thus writes on this matter:—"When," he says, "a thought comes fresh into the mind, and chooses, as it were, at the moment, its own words, the meaning of these words is more present to the mind of the speaker, and their power is more felt, than when he recurs to them in the memory, or upon manuscript. In the same way, all the emotions in extempore speaking are more fresh and genial than when

they are reproduced in the other methods. Hence there is more natural warmth in the declamation, more earnestness in the address, greater animation in the manner, more of the lighting-up of the soul in the countenance and whole mien, more freedom and meaning in the gesture."

But, as the same writer observes, in order to speak with this effect, a man must know well beforehand what he is going to say. And to a certain extent the speaker must have foreseen, not merely the structure, but the words, of any sentence which he designs to be specially emphatic. Otherwise, he will not be able—at all events not without great practice in extemporary speaking—to deliver it with full emphasis and effect. "A good speaker," says Mr. M'Ilvaine, "always foresees his emphatic words. As the accomplished rider, in order to obtain a better view of the wall or ditch before him, raises himself in his stirrups, then settles himself again in his saddle, reins in his horse, gathers the animal's hind legs well under his body, and at the precise moment lifts his head with the bridle, applies the whip or spur, and launches himself over the obstacle, amidst the cheers of his more timid companions—so the accomplished speaker looks ahead for his emphatic words, and, as he approaches them, draws in his breath, and gathers up all his forces, and, at the

precise moment, flings himself upon them, with all the impulse gained from the preceding restraint. A single word, spoken with such emphasis, will sometimes thrill a whole assembly." There is nothing, almost, which an earnest man cannot do with an audience, just as there is no quality, or any combination of qualities, which can compensate for the want of earnestness in a speaker.

Yes! whilst he labours to render his discourse clear and simple, full of interest, of sympathy, and of dignified attractiveness, only let the young preacher be thoroughly in earnest, and all will be well with him. Then, realizing to the full, the dignity of his position as minister and ambassador of Christ; appreciating, at its true value, the gravity and momentous nature of the interests which have been committed to his keeping: he will rise, heart and soul, with every instinct and with every impulse, to the great work which it has pleased the Master to give him to do. Then, like another Paul, will he make known the message of the Lord, not in the persuasive words of human wisdom, but in the showing of the spirit and power. Then, labouring with much prayer and with many tears, it will matter but little to him what judgment may be passed upon him by men, provided he be found faithful by Him who is to bring to light the hidden things of

darkness, who is to make manifest the counsels of the heart. Then, becoming all things to all men, that thus he may win all to Christ, in the fulness of his love, in the ardour of his zeal for the salvation of his brethren, he will be ready to become anathema for the souls for which his Master died. Then, going forth at the sound of the Master's voice, will he scatter the good seed that is to bring forth its fruit in due season, a fruit that shall surely remain long after he himself shall have been laid to his rest. Then, strong and invincible in the power of God's word, shall his sound go forth into all the earth, and his words into the ends of the whole world: then, shall his feet be beautiful upon the mountains, beautiful as the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, of them that bring glad tidings of good things. Then, verily and indeed, shall his mission amongst men be crowned with honour, for it shall be a mission of mercy, of benediction, and of love. Then, shall all men, knowing him for a man of God, and a minister of Christ, receive the teaching of his lips with humble and with docile hearts. Then, shall that teaching be blessed a hundred, yea, a hundred times a hundred fold. And, then, when the time shall have come, and the faithful and prudent servant shall have been called to his reward: through all the priceless years of his eternity shall he shine like a star in the

firmament of God, because, during the days of his ministry here below, he laboured with all his heart and soul, to the best of the ability which God had given him, to guide many faltering feet in the way of salvation, to give light to many that sat in darkness, hearing to many that were deaf, and speech to many that were dumb; because, in one word, he fed many a hungry and thirsty soul with the blessed food of Justice, of Sanctity, and of Truth: *Qui ad justitiam erudiunt multos, quasi stellæ in perpetuas æternitates, fulgebunt:* FIAT, FIAT.

THE END.

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ERRATA.

At the end of page 32, after the word "well" read "affairs."
At page 142, in note, for "Sol." read "Lol."

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